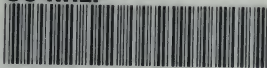
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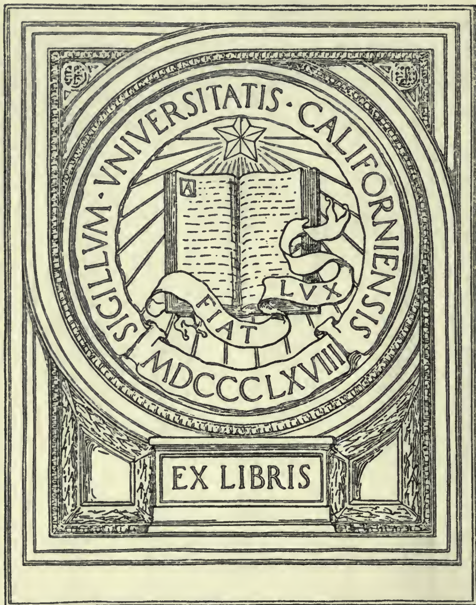

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THE
REPUTATION OF GEORGE SAXON,
AND OTHER STORIES.

THE REPUTATION OF GEORGE SAXON,

And other Stories.

BY

MORLEY ROBERTS.

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

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LA BELLE
SAUVAGE

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UNIV. OF
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THE REPUTATION OF GEORGE SAXON.

II

THE REPUTATION OF GEORGE SAXON.

SOME months after George Saxon came into his fortune—which, by the way, was fully the quarter of a million reported by the papers—I received a note from him asking me to call at his chambers. I had wondered much whether our old familiar intercourse in the office of Messrs. Repton and Lyne, Publishers, Paternoster Row, was to come entirely to an end when he received this great accession of wealth, and it pleased me to think that he was still mindful of the fact that we had been much to each other in the days gone by. For two clerks in a publishing-office who had secret literary aspirations could not help being either friends or enemies, and we certainly were not the latter, though I confess coming to the conclusion—which to all appearance has since been falsified—that he possessed no real literary ability, whereas my own verse was distinctly good. I fancy he really recognised what the truth was on that point, although he was so inordinately vain, and had such

an insatiable appetite for praise, that I often thought his mind was not quite so healthy as it should be. Yet I certainly was glad to see him again.

As I walked up from the city I thought of his first coherent words on learning that three sudden and unexpected deaths had made him the heir to so much money. He had said, "Now I shall be able to do something," referring of course to those literary aspirations which he and I had found well to conceal in Paternoster Row. Our employers, having dealings with would-be poets, were even more likely than the public to esteem such men fools, and doubtless shared the common opinion which stamps them as idiots until they have made money. Yet now George was free, and in a position to please himself, I sincerely hoped he would also please my critical faculty by consigning his verses to a well-merited oblivion. Rather unjustly, I doubted his self-discernment.

I found him in no such luxurious quarters as my imagination had suggested. Still, a flat in Piccadilly must have cost him twice my yearly income, and when I entered his library the sight of his books gave me the only pang of envy I ever experienced during our friendship and the period—which could hardly be called such—that was soon to begin. For it will

be seen that, poor as I was, I had little cause to envy him in the end.

"Well, George," I said, with a sigh, which I could not quite suppress, so great was the contrast between my home and his, "this is a change, is it not? Who would have imagined it if he had seen your rooms at Camberwell? You are a lucky man!"

In spite of his luck, I thought he looked worried and anxious. He spoke without lifting his head.

"I have heard that before, Will; but money can't get everything, after all."

"I should like to know what it cannot get, except youth or beauty; it will go far to get health, even."

"Hum!" said George, and then relapsed into silence. I began to see he had something on his mind. But presently he rang the bell, and ordered in whiskey. He gave me the best cigar I ever smoked in my life, and pressed me to drink. He took a very fair quantity himself, and presently began to walk up and down the room. Once or twice I thought he was going to speak, but he checked himself.

"Do you take advantage of your leisure and write now, George?" I asked, as I sat stretched out before the fire. He stopped walking about, and leant against the mantelpiece in rather a dejected attitude. It was the first time I ever thought him at all good-

looking, for though he was tall and fair—a great contrast to me, by the way—his features were very irregular. However, with rather longer hair than is considered the proper thing in the City, and handsome clothes, he did not look bad. He waited to answer my question till I repeated it.

"Well—no—well, I don't do much that way. I wish I did. I rather wanted to speak to you on the subject. You know I used to say no reputation was so well worth having as the literary?"

I nodded. Certainly, it had been quite a craze with him.

"Hume said that, if you remember, and I quite agree with him, and yet—in spite of my desire to do good work—I don't seem to succeed."

"Ha!" said I to myself. "Is he really coming to see the truth, after all?"

"Of course," he went on, with an air of confidence, "I believe I have it in me. Still, I don't want to make myself ridiculous in my position. I used to think my verse was rather good, though I admit you never believed much in it. Well, lately it has gone under another name to half a dozen publishers, and not one of them has offered to publish it, even at my cost. I suppose I, who have been in a publishing-office, ought to know what that means."

It meant, as I knew, that his work was really altogether too stupid. Every publisher has a standard, even if it be a very low one, and will not go below it. So I shrugged my shoulders. Of course he knew what I implied.

"Really, George—do you want me to speak candidly?" I asked.

"Of course."

"Well, then, I don't think verse is your strong point."

He began walking up and down the room again. He stopped at the other side, and leant against the book-shelves in the shadow, for the lamps were near the fire, and heavily shaded.

"Then, Will, there is another thing. I am in love."

"Yes, George?"

"And the lady in question thinks I am a poet. You see, I told her so one night when I had had a little too much to drink. What am I to do?"

"What do you mean?"

"How am I to save my credit with her?" he cried impatiently. "I am not quite a fool, and I can see now that if no publishers think my verse worth publishing, other folks will probably think it very bad."

"But surely not the woman who loves you," I said.

"Who told you she loves me?" he cried passionately. "I wish it were so. But now I must give her some verses, and I have nothing suitable. I can't even try just now. What can I do? Can't you suggest something?"

I reflected for a moment. It seemed to me that I gathered his drift, but it would not do to be in too great a hurry.

"I don't know that I can, George. Can't you copy some out of an old unknown poet?"

"It's too risky. An unknown poet might do, but not one in print." He paused, and took a turn up and down the room again. "Have you yourself been writing lately?"

The hint was too plain to be mistaken this time. I took that hint, and the result may easily be guessed. I was soon in possession of an increased income, although my employers did not recognise my valuable services any better than before.

During the following year I had little difficulty in selling most of the verse I wrote. Some people may be surprised at my being ready to part with my poems in such a way, but if they take into consideration the facts that I had been trying in vain for years to make anything of them, that I was very poor, and that my employers would not have been pleased

to see a volume with my name on the title-page, their astonishment will be lessened.

I certainly found the increased income very handy. My wife was foolish enough to think my salary had been raised, and I did not undeceive her; for though George Saxon had made no bargain as to secrecy, it was of course understood that all our dealings were strictly confidential. Our intercourse was usually by letters, which were carefully written on both sides. We did not commit ourselves. If he wanted a poem on a specific subject, he would say that he was thinking of writing such-and-such verses. Then I sent him some dealing with the same subject. But, as a general rule, I sent him everything I wrote for him to look at, and I must say his taste was pretty good, for he rarely returned any, save for corrections.

At the end of a year he sent for me again. I went eagerly enough, and was received very kindly. I noticed a queer change in him—one, however, which was not unexpected by me. He would not speak otherwise than as if he had really written those poems which I had sold him. This came out soon after I was comfortably established in an arm-chair by his fire.

"I am thinking, Will," said he, with a little

nervous cough and without looking at me, "of—of bringing out a volume of poems."

"Yes? indeed—ah!" I answered reflectively, without showing any astonishment. "Anonymously or not, George?"

"No, not anonymously. You see, they are well known as mine in a certain circle of society."

I imagined he meant the —— Club, of which he was now a member, and those new friends among whom he had found his lady-love. So of course I answered "Yes."

"And—well—I should like you to correct the proofs, if you can spare the time. I will pay you liberally."

I nodded, and undertook the task.

I must acknowledge I felt a pang when I first saw these creatures of my brain decked out in their garb of fine rough paper, with uncut edges and great margins, but I stifled my pain by thinking how impossible it would be for me to accomplish so much of myself. Besides, I chuckled to think that I alone of all the minor poets was actually making money out of verse. Yet the title-page, "Poems and Ballads; by George Saxon," hurt me more than a little. It certainly was very hard. However, in spite of all this, I did my work honestly, and when the volume

finally issued from the press I watched for reviews as eagerly as my friend and employer.

The notices were somehow very favourable, but I cannot help fancying that those who bespattered a wealthy man with sweet-phrased adulation and rhythmically flowing flattery would have dismissed me at the best with the veiled contempt which sneers behind the faint praise of "a minor poet of considerable sweetness." Yet the reviewers, with some exceptions, declared that here was a new writer who had won repute at a bound, while those papers which occasionally have notices of coming men curiously canvassed Saxon's claim on the laureateship when it should become vacant.

On going to see him, I found his table strewn with notices. In all, there were some scores of them, for more than one of the Press-cutting agencies had been called in to feed his vanity. By this time it seemed to me that he was almost, if not quite, convinced that he had written the poems himself; and, strangely enough, I began to feel that he had more right to them than I. Perhaps the liberal cheque he gave me for my trouble aided me in coming to this conclusion.

For a considerable time I saw nothing of him, and have very little actual fact to go on in judging

the causes which led to the next development. Yet I feel certain that if the girl he had been courting had not married another man, no catastrophe would have resulted from his pursuing the course on which he had embarked, and that he would probably have settled down to a quiet *bourgeois* life. But this was not to be; the lady did desert him, and to console himself he went more into society, where the wealth which made him so desirable a *parti* caused him to receive that adulation which was fatal to his diseased vanity.

I began to see in some of the papers that he was devoting himself to literary work again. Many *canards* flew about as to the matter he was engaged on. It was a new volume of verse; it was a novel; it was a series of critical essays. The rich author began to grow famous on his unread and unwritten books. I began to wonder when I should hear from him again, especially when these vague reports settled down into the uncontradicted assertion that he would shortly bring out a novel dealing with a phase of modern life. As I did not hear from him, I at last ventured to call.

I acknowledge I was very curious to see him, and I knew that my going there then was partly an encouragement for him to continue as he had begun. It

was not long before I saw this, and regretted it, for from now on I began to be thoroughly involved in a curious business, which might turn out awkwardly for me at any moment. I would not have attempted it save for Saxon's promise to indemnify me for any loss I might incur, supposing I were dismissed from my post. Soon after the commencement of this interview he came to the point, though his words were obscure.

"People say I am writing a novel," he remarked, as he stared out of the window, "and I have even been told of the very subject. I have not got quite so far myself. Do you—hum!—do you think I could do a novel, Will?"

I wondered a moment, and shook my head gravely.

"I should not like to venture an opinion," I answered.

"I could rely on your help, I suppose?"

"It is not in my line, I fear."

"Do you not know any one who would—revise a manuscript? or couldn't you find some one?"

I certainly might find some one to revise a novel, but, of course, Saxon meant "write." And even that was not impossible. In our office we were offered novels every day by poor and unsuccessful men.

"I might find out what you want. But then, there would be some risk."

"Not if it's managed properly. Think over it, and let me know. Do you want a cheque for expenses?"

"It might be useful," I answered cheerfully, and he gave me one for a hundred pounds. There was no meanness about George Saxon.

I set my wits to work at once. I was to get hold of a fairly good novel, which at the worst would do George no discredit in point of technical merit, while the real author must be a discreet man, who would see on which side his bread was buttered. I sat thinking about the matter in the office until our chief clerk reprimanded me, and brought my wits back to every-day business. However, I fancied that I had solved the problem.

I wrote to George, and asked him if he would not like to "write" a novel dealing with subjects calculated to bring a blush to the cheek of the Young Person. I reminded him that most of the younger men seemed to have a fancy for realistic novels of a morbid character. For I felt sure that if I could buy a book it must be one which a publisher would hardly take. George answered that he was now engaged on such an one. That was his

cautious way of giving me permission to do as I pleased.

For the next week or two I kept my eyes on the manuscripts which came in, noting, as well as I could, the men who brought them. I saw nothing to please me until one afternoon, when a young fellow, whose face I fancied I knew, entered and laid a large packet on the counter, saying shortly, "Messrs. Repton and Lyne." I could see he was the author of the matter he presented us with, and hoped that it was a novel, for I liked his looks. He was very tall and thin, with long black hair and piercing black eyes, which would have looked better under a better hat. His clothes were shabby, his umbrella worn, his gloves rather old.

"If you are as clever as you look, you ought to do," said I to myself. "You are good-looking—just the young fellow to be a favourite in society, if you could go out. But you are too poor. Hence you are morbid, and probably write novels which nobody will buy. And this isn't your first."

I looked at the title-page: "Hungry Generations," by "Henry Halkett." That is the name I must give him, for he is now celebrated, and certainly would not like any one to know his curious dealings with me.

"Hum!" I thought, "my guess was right. 'No

hungry generations tread thee down!' Keats was in his mind. He is morbid, and has never published a book. No 'By the author of——' here. But I wonder if we are the first firm to get hold of it?"

This thought worried me a little. I looked at the MS. carefully, and came to the conclusion that we were the first to whom it had been sent. I could easily verify that later on.

What I did after this was, I know, quite unjustifiable from any ordinary point of view, for, taking a note of Mr. Halkett's address, I placed both letter and MS. in my own desk, and did not allow them to take the ordinary course. That evening I walked to Brixton, and strolled down a side street, until I was able to inspect a certain number. "Yes," thought I, "if his appearance suggested poverty, his dwelling-place confirms it." I wrote to Saxon on reaching home that I thought I had my eye on something which would suit him.

On reading the MS., which I began next day, I was pleased with my penetration and power of judging character, for "Hungry Generations," though morbid, was decidedly clever, and dealing, as it evidently did, with the writer's own career, had a very convincing atmosphere of truth about it. Next day I took a little room, furnished as an office, in a street

near the Strand, and had my name painted on the door as Mr. Williams. I was quite delighted with being in business on my own account, and in order to give my position an air of stability, I posted letters to myself at intervals during the next two weeks, going there twice a day, as a rule, while wearing blue spectacles.

At the end of a fortnight I wrote to Mr. Halkett in the name of the firm, regretting that though there was much in his book which was clever, it was not, in their judgment, of such a character as would justify them in publishing it. I returned the MS. the same day, and followed it up with a letter from my Strand office, written in a feigned hand, requesting Mr. Halkett to be so good as to call on me on business in the evening of the following day, at seven o'clock. I had not the least doubt that he would come, and I rehearsed the scene which would take place between us all the day—not, I confess, without a little uneasiness.

By six o'clock I was in my new office, arranging things to look as business-like as possible. At the very stroke of seven there was a knock at my door, and Arthur Halkett entered at my bidding him come in. He looked at me doubtfully.

"You are——"

"Oh yes!" said I. "You are Mr. Halkett."

"I am," he answered; "and you——"

"If you will kindly take a seat for a moment, I shall be ready," I replied, going on writing, as if I had much business to transact. He fidgeted on his chair, and seemed very uneasy.

"Oh yes!" I cried at last, throwing some papers on one side, and turning towards him. "So you are Mr. Halkett."

"And you?" he said again.

"Williams is my name. I wrote to you, Mr. Halkett."

"And at your request I have come."

I settled my spectacles and looked at him. He had made no alteration in his dress, unless his gloves were a trifle newer than those I had seen him in. I began suddenly—

"You follow a literary career, Mr. Halkett?'

"I do, Mr. Williams. Has that anything to do with the reason you sent for me? Has any one——"

"My dear sir, don't let us be in a hurry. I know that you are a writer, and that is, doubtless, why I asked you to grant me the honour of an interview. May I ask—pardon such a question—whether you are very—or even fairly—successful?"

He flushed a little.

"Do I look successful?" he asked, somewhat bitterly. "Have I the fat, sleek appearance of an established fame? That is the reason I want to learn how you came to know of me."

I smiled at him, and nibbled the end of my pen.

"That point is not at all essential to our doing business eminently satisfactory to both. Will it not suffice that I know your name, your address, and the occupation which you follow, with, if I am rightly informed, so much ability and so much promise?"

He bowed rather sardonically, and with an air of doubt as to whether I was not chaffing him.

"For if it does," I continued, "I have something to propose."

"Then I think, Mr. Williams," he said, a little dryly, "that it will be as well to come to the point."

"There is no need for any great hurry, my dear sir. Hurry is—let us say—rather brutal. My time is at your disposal."

"I was not thinking of your time," he remarked, with the first smile I had seen on his handsome young face.

"But of your own. Well, then, if yours is valuable, and you insist, we will come to the point. You write novels?"

"I do."

"You sell them?"

"I don't," very bluntly, but with a twinge.

"Ah!" I remarked. "I fear such is often the case at first. The literary profession is not a Tom Tiddler's ground. Now tell me why you don't sell your work. I am told your style is not at all bad."

He moved a little uneasily in his chair.

"Pray, how do you know so much about me?"

"Because you interest me at present. But to waive that: have you any objection to giving me your candid opinion as to why your work doesn't sell?"

"It is hard to say. But I fancy it is too morbid."

"Ah!—I understand. The publishers tell you that it is clever, but will not pay, and I daresay some of them suggest you should publish it at your own expense, or at any rate take a share in the cost."

He nodded rather bitterly.

"Well, then, why don't you write matter of a more cheerful tone?"

"How can a man do that who—well, it doesn't matter. I have not a very cheerful temperament."

"I daresay a little success would alter that, Mr. Halkett?"

"I daresay it might."

"Or even money by itself, even an easier time,

without worry or struggle, might enable you to do work which would be bright? Do you agree with me?"

"I fancy I do. But"—and he rose—"I wish you would come to the point, or I shall go. What does this mean?"

"We appear to have come to the point, Mr. Halkett. As it seems to me, we are fencing."

"You may be, but with a blind man. I don't understand you or this scene."

"Come," said I, in a decided tone, "sit down, and you shall understand me in a moment. Sit down. It is for your advantage. You have now an opportunity which may never occur again."

He sat down and stared at me.

"Have you written a novel lately?"

"I finished one a fortnight ago."

"Have you got rid of it?"

"No; it was returned this morning from——"

"From whom?"

"Repton and Lyne's."

"Ah, yes: very good men in their way; but a trifle narrow—a trifle narrow. And will you tell me the title of your book?"

He did so without any hesitation.

"Now then, Mr. Halkett, I really believe we are

coming to the point. Let me ask you which you want most just at present: money or fame?"

"Sir, the question is an idle one. One cannot live on fame."

"Then I presume you want money. Yet, I dare-say, if a publisher offered to publish your book on half profits, you would be content, though there were no profits to divide. Now, which would you prefer: his doing that or buying your book for fifty pounds, and then not publishing it?"

"Mr. Williams," he answered firmly, "these appear to me to be abstract questions, and, as such, not a little absurd."

"You do me wrong, Mr. Halkett," I replied; "these are not abstract questions at all. Say now, which you would prefer: the possible fame or the actual cash?"

"The cash! the cash!" said he, with a little agitation, for he began to perceive that I was in earnest, and not grinding the wind.

"Ah! come now, that is what I wanted to get at. Now sit down again, and listen to me quietly. I want to put a case to you. Suppose I were to buy a manuscript novel of you, and publish it afterwards with—some one else's name to it. What would you think?"

He stared at me without speaking, for full a minute, in amazement, and then replied by a question.

"What? Are such things really done? I have heard of them, but——"

"They are done. Let me prove it to you. Send me the MS. of your last book, and if I like it you shall have fifty pounds down and half the profits there may be, on the conditions that you forget you ever wrote it, and in no way whatever make any claim to the authorship."

"Do you mean this?" he gasped.

"Do you take me for a fool, who wastes his time in acting vain scenes? I am a man of business. You may think it a queer kind of business, but that is beside the point. Come now, let me have your answer."

He waved his hand and stared at me.

"I must think."

"Very well; you can have till to-morrow; after half-past twelve my offer is off. I shall be here between twelve and one. Bring the manuscript with you, and I will undertake to let you know in three days if it suits me. I must have it read by my reader, of course. You shall have the money directly if his verdict is favourable—as I don't doubt it will be, from

what I hear of you. Remember, I rely on your honour in this matter. Now I must be off, for I have an engagement at the other end of London."

He rose like a man in a dream and took his hat.

"I sha'n't believe this when I wake in the morning," he muttered.

"Very well, then," I answered sharply, as I slammed the drawers of my desk and locked them; "go home now and post me the MS. while you do believe it. And I will take that for your answer. Good-night, Mr. Halkett. I am very pleased to have met you."

I pushed him out of the room, patted his shoulder, shut and locked the door, and going into the street, hailed a hansom. I left him standing on the kerb staring after me. I congratulated myself on the way I had managed matters, for I felt I could trust him. I was not wrong.

Before three days had passed Mr. Arthur Halkett was richer by fifty pounds, and George Saxon was the possessor of the manuscript novel, which in less than two months was published under the title, "A Struggle with Fate." In order to prevent any suspicion, he undertook the laborious task of copying it himself; but, doubtless, the success it achieved compensated him. It had a fairly large sale, owing to great

advertisement and some skilful puffing, which I managed to procure for an equivalent. I was able to send a further small cheque to its real author, for I treated him with scrupulous honesty.

I have been thus particular in detailing my conversation with this young author—who, I am happy to say, is becoming well known by books which are not of a morbid cast—because it was not the last transaction of the kind in which I was concerned. For as appetite grows by eating, so does the desire for fame increase with increased notoriety, and dating from the appearance of "A Struggle with Fate," George Saxon began to pour forth books from the press with a rapidity which I feared was insane, but which to outsiders betokened a catholic intellect, and an entirely unprecedented capacity for work.

It was wholly vain for me to attempt to stay his course. He, who was in my power, assumed the tone of a master, and bade me mind my own business. Although I feared that an exposure must come at last, and entreated him at any rate to stick to one line, after buying one more novel from Halkett he discarded fiction, and produced some philosophical essays, written by a curate with many children, who needed cash as well as philosophy. That was a serious step, but one which brought about much

worse consequences was his venturing to take up history. He who knew none—for his memory was fickle and grew more treacherous still—"wrote" a tractate on the Holy Roman Empire, which was followed by an elaborate essay on Art. This was succeeded by an "Ideal Philosophy," which only years of German reading could have enabled a Coleridge to compose. Both these were bought from a clergyman.

If he had refused to go into society things might have yet gone well with him, but his inflated vanity left him as helpless as a drifting balloon. He went into the company of learned men, and began to earn the reputation of Goldsmith for talking. He was in despair at his inability of speech and his dire lack of knowledge, and I knew he began to suspect that his brain was giving way.

Yet, in spite of this frightful suspicion, which I felt was well founded, he still kept "at work," as the papers said, and twice a year at least brought out one book or another to pile on the pyramid which was weighing him down. His friends, who were not in his confidence, implored him to rest, and did him all the harm possible by taking him more into society; for there his desire to shine made him talk. He had not sufficient self-control to hide his ignorance. And now he began to devote all his

spare time to study of a sort which surely no other man ever went in for. For a while, with a certain sense of shame, he kept it from me, but at last—in a horrible fit of despair—he opened his mind. It was a ghastly scene. I found him reading his own philosophy, and almost tearing his thinning and prematurely grey hair over it.

"Yes, yes," he said feverishly, "I am glad you have come. Sit down, sit down, Rayner; take this book. Just ask me questions about it. Go on, go on!"

I was shocked to see him nervous and trembling and so painfully eager.

"George," I said earnestly, "this won't do. You must give it up. You are killing yourself. Go, look in the glass; you are old before your time. You must give it up."

He rose from his seat, shaking violently. With his sunken cheeks and dark-circled eyes, with their insane passion, he was dreadful to look at.

"Give it up, give it up!" he shrieked, in the tone of an old man, though he was not yet forty. "Do you think I have slaved and suffered to build up my great reputation to see it go like a bubble? No, no! I will enjoy it; I will enjoy it!"

"Great heaven!" I thought; "enjoy it!"

"And you must help me more than you have done. You had better give Repton and Lyne notice, and be with me always. You shall be my secretary. Tell them to-morrow."

I flatly refused, and then he grew angry.

"You shall, you shall; you must! I will give you four hundred a year. Already I have left you ten thousand pounds in my will. When will you make so much?"

I succumbed to the temptation. Would that I had not! What a life I now began to lead!

Nobody saw his misery but myself, but it made me wretched. I was forced to read to him daily. I abhor philosophy, and hate history with a schoolboy's hatred; but he would take no denial. He had created a devil which I feared and which he worshipped. His reputation was a Frankenstein's monster. Daily we sacrificed to it—hours I toiled over German translations, racking my brain to comprehend Fichte, Kant, and Schelling, in order to explain their subtly conceived and diabolical mysteries. I went to bed to dream of Ideas. My only relaxation was when I assumed the name and blue spectacles of Mr. Williams, in order to deal with some other Halkett. I had a certain pride in the dexterity with which I handled our authors, and salved my conscience

for my part in such a fraud by reflecting that George Saxon's money was very welcome in many a poor literary household.

It would surpass belief if I said so many years went by without anyone whispering that all this strange heterogeneous mass of poems, fiction, essays, philosophy, and history could not have proceeded from one pen. I heard such whispers, but kept them from Saxon. Yet they made me terribly anxious—so anxious, indeed, that once I even threatened to expose him, hoping that fear might make him hear reason. I misjudged the power of his insane resolution.

"If you do so, you shall starve, you, and your wife and children! I will destroy my will, and you shall have nothing—nothing; do you hear? You are too old to get work! Ha! Repton and Lyne won't take you back. You know that!"

I knew it too well, for once, in a fit of rage at the slavery in which I found myself, I had asked in vain to be reinstated in my old position. So I had to bend to him.

"Come, now," said he, "don't be a fool. What am I to talk about this evening? Who is to be at the Ponsonbys'? Give me the list."

For he made a rule never to go out unless he

knew the guests. To such a man this was easily given. I told him the names, and went to work cramming him with stuff which I loathed, while he, grey-haired and tottering wretch that he now was, tried painfully to learn what I painfully repeated. By heaven! life was worthless to me, and I even began to think of that escape from my troubles which I feared for Saxon. I could not even hope. But the end was approaching.

One afternoon he sent me to finish the negotiations for the acquisition of a theological work by a very broad Churchman. I demurred in vain.

"It shall be the last," was all I could get from him. But, alas! he had promised as much before.

"Besides," I urged, "don't you know that this will be a change of front on your part. You have been teaching hitherto what practically amounts to Agnosticism, and this is dogmatic, even if it is broad."

"Go!" he said; and I went, for I could see he would admit of no argument, although his physical condition seemed worse than I had ever known it. "And," he added fiercely, "see that you are back by six. We have much to do. I have to meet Dr. Vincent to-night."

I groaned in spirit, for this was another historian,

and our history nights were almost harder than those devoted to philosophy. I went away in wretched spirits, feeling unfit for the task before me. But it was the last time I played the part of Mr. Williams, and it was the worst.

It had been a matter of considerable difficulty to meet with any theological work of such a character as Saxon had indicated to me, and I only found it through the medium of the curate from whom I had bought our volume of critical essays. My first interview with its author, a clergyman named Verity, had been successful so far as I could judge. He had not shown much surprise at its purpose; indeed, he had taken it so greatly as a matter of course that I naturally concluded that his friend had enlightened him on the subject, although such a proceeding was strictly forbidden in every agreement I had hitherto made. Yet he did not ask a very high price: unless one hundred and fifty pounds be considered such for a theological work. But I did not know him; there was more under his cassock than he showed.

Mr. Verity was punctual to his appointment. At five precisely he entered my office. I received him courteously.

"Your book is eminently satisfactory. We are

pleased with it, very pleased. I will write you your cheque."

I took out my cheque-book—for I had a private account at the Bank of England in the name of Williams—and drew it out in a methodical manner. This done, I found the copy of the agreement which he was to sign, and held it out. He made no motion, but leant back in his chair and looked at me.

"Well, sir?" said I.

"It's not enough, Mr. Williams."

"What do you mean, Mr. Verity? Is it not the price we agreed upon?"

"Quite so, but still it is not enough. I have been reflecting," he answered, with an ambiguous smile.

"I do not understand you," I replied. "However, if you wish a trifle more, let us hear your new price."

I crossed my legs, folded my arms, and looked straight at him. But though my attitude was one of perfect ease, I was anxious, and I own it. He shrugged his shoulders.

"My terms are now, Mr. Williams, exactly fifteen hundred pounds."

If I did not start—and I am proud to say I did not—it was only owing to a tremendous effort on my part. The scoundrel!—and a clergyman!—who

would have looked quite innocent if it had not been for a keen and subtle smile, which he seemed to wish to hide—to act in this way! What did it mean?

"I fancy, Mr. Verity, that this MS., able as it is, can hardly be worth such an enormous sum."

"There are very different markets," was his dry answer, "and to you I think it is worth so much. But you can take it or leave it."

"There seems to be some mystery here, Mr. Verity."

"A great deal more on your side than on mine, my dear sir," said he sardonically. "I am speaking plainly, at any rate."

I winced, for what he said was true enough. I began to fear that I had caught a Tartar, and should have to pay up and look pleasant. It would be very hard on me, considering that I looked to my banking account to help me if anything happened of an untoward character. I certainly could not tell Saxon of this. The very thought of it would kill him. I determined to fight as long as I could.

"That may be, Mr. Verity," I replied tartly; "but our mystery you have no concern in."

"Yes, to the tune of fifteen hundred pounds. That's my concern."

"What if I refuse?"

"Mr. Williams, you won't refuse. I know far too much for you to act so unkindly to me."

I could have throttled him, he looked so sure; and yet how much did he know? Almost any smart scoundrel could have gone as far without any knowledge whatever, and I was not inclined to part with such a sum to a man who might be bragging on nothing.

"You know too much, eh? Well, in another sense perhaps you do. There is nothing to know. But come, let us hear what you think."

He leant back in his chair, and stuck his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat, with an air of assurance which was maddening. I almost fancied he winked.

"Mr. Williams, if you are a card-player, you know that in some cases a man may show his cards without losing a chance. You shall see mine. Come, now, let us begin, for my hand is very pretty. You deal in books, and doubtless know that in authorship there is such a thing as plagiarism: that does not concern me. There is such a thing as literary forgery: that is also beside the point. There is, again, such a thing as stealing a manuscript and publishing it as one's own: that seems to me nearer the question in hand. There is, as we know (you and I, Mr. Williams), such

a thing as buying the manuscript of a needy author, and putting it forth under an alien name: I think we touch the matter now. Now, my dear sir, supposing a man (with money) buys one manuscript from me, and another from another, so building up a reputation, he acts in a fraudulent manner, for the public are cheated into admiring a sham, and the real authors gain nothing but a base pecuniary reward. It is a crime—though, as you would doubtless say, not a legal one. Such crimes, Mr. Williams, are committed. Now, though I might suspect a man of making such a false reputation, I might fail to prove it satisfactorily to anyone but an acute critic. I am an acute critic, my dear sir, as you will believe before I finish; but I know there are others equal to myself, and those I could convince. Let me tell you how."

He rose up, and stood as if he were delivering an oration, while I sat very quietly, with a sinking heart. He would be too much for me if I could think of nothing to checkmate him with, and I longed to do that for so many reasons. Strange as it may seem, this preliminary attack on the great reputation I had helped to build up angered me deeply. I had actually come to revere it myself. He went on—

"Years ago I began to suspect that there was something wrong with regard to a name which is now

very generally venerated. I began, I own, by admiring his genius and his catholicity; it seemed astonishing that the author of very pretty poems and of a novel which, if morbid, lacked not strength, and was even occasionally powerful, should likewise display something of the same critical power on which I pride myself. When, to the reputation secured by these diverse works, he added the philosophic acumen of a German and the research of no mean historian, I did more than admire: I wondered. And let me tell you that wonder is for ever akin to incredulity; we (of our cloth, that is) know so much.

"Now, after premising this, if you are a great reader—and I see you have something of the look of the man who burns the midnight oil—you may know a little of that which we call style. It is a subtle thing to deal with, and aërial; gaseous, not to be rudely grasped; vague, yet real. It is the breath of the writer's soul congealed in his work; it is more the writer than the work itself; and by the chemic forces of acute analytic criticism, it is recognisable by many tests surpassing the belief of the unlearned. Now, since I suspected, I applied myself to study, and I used these tests to such purpose that at last I said, 'I have found it.' My veneration for learning, my admiration of ability, gave place to wonder of another

order. I had unearthed an unparalleled and most gigantic fraud ; I marvelled at the man's audacity ; I questioned myself as to his methods. Why did I not proclaim my belief ? It was easy to convince myself, but others, who lacked my instinct, could not easily follow my path. Besides, I wanted proof which was more than deductive, for I knew my hypothesis wanted other verification than my intuition. My name is Verity : it has had an influence on me since my childhood ; but though I have ever sought the truth, I have always been cautious.

" How, then, did I verify my conclusions ? Come now, I will tell you. You bought a book of critical essays from my friend. He never revealed it, but I read that book issued under another name than his. Now I tell you I know my friend's style, his turns of thought, his reasoning, his phraseology ; given a premiss, I could argue from it as he would. In one word, knowing the man, I knew his book—and then you applied to me. That is all, but it proved my theory. I have no more to say, beyond two words, and they are words known all over literary Europe—words which once I admired, but which now I scorn. I say, George Saxon ! Let me have your cheque for one thousand five hundred pounds, or—well, there is no need for further speech. I wait your answer."

I sat dumbfounded, and had nothing to say. During the whole harangue, of which I have only given the outlines, I was held without power of speech. I recognised a man of intellect, who had the gift of obtaining prolonged attention, even if his subject had been one of less absorbing interest. As he analysed Saxon's books one by one, criticising the various styles, he confounded me with his acute deductions and accurate memory; and when he saw the effect he produced, he absolutely swelled with gratified vanity. His style and subject made me oblivious of the time and the fading light, but when he ended I wrote him his cheque.

"Yes, Mr. Verity, you shall have what you ask," I said; "but it is not for the book, it is for the learning and acuteness, which I believe cannot be paralleled in England."

"You flatter me, Mr. Williams," he returned, with a smile; "but still, from a man of your character and discernment, such eulogy is pleasant."

"Confound the blackmailer!" I thought; "he is laughing at me."

He took the cheque, looked at it, and placed it in his pocket-book.

"I suppose I shall have no difficulty in cashing it?" he asked, eyeing me very hard.

"None at all, I assure you." For I certainly did not mean to trifle with him. If I had known what was in George Saxon's mind at that moment I might not have been so sincere. I was thinking of my banking account, which then stood at about three hundred pounds, and which would have to be considerably added to by me next morning from my own private savings. I bowed him out politely and cursed him mentally. And just then the clock struck eight. Saxon had bidden me return at seven. Rushing off in a panic, I took a cab and went to his house, but he had gone out before I reached it. The man-servant told me he seemed to be in a very disturbed frame of mind.

In his library I found the table strewn with various histories, thrown open at incongruous periods. To me it was a horrible sight, for I pictured the wretched and unable man sitting at that table trying to pick up even a few commonplace facts as he rushed off to dazzle the crowd with his splendid and fatal reputation. I was wretched myself, and though I went home, I could not sleep.

No, I did not sleep all night; I was awake when the postman came. He brought me a letter which horrified me, and at the same time made me burn with delight. I could turn the tables on Verity. I

almost laughed as I ate my breakfast. At ten o'clock I stood on the steps of the bank on which I had drawn the blackmailer's cheque. As the door opened I turned round, and saw him coming. I nodded benignantly, and, entering, drew out every penny which stood in my name of Williams—every penny of it. I left nothing. As I pocketed the notes I saw him.

"Ah," said he, with a smile, "you have been paying in money, eh?" and with that he presented my cheque.

I watched and chuckled as the teller took it. He caught sight of me, and beckoned.

"Mr. Williams," he whispered, "I have a cheque of yours here for one thousand five hundred pounds. Do you know that your balance is now nothing?"

"I do," I replied.

"Then what am I to do with this?"

"Let it take the usual course," said I. And I waited to see the result.

The teller took the cheque, and wrote on the back of it. Then he handed it to Verity.

"What does this mean?" said he fiercely, looking as black as thunder.

"Refer to drawer," was the reply.

"What?" asked Verity, in an excited voice. "Are there no funds?"

"Sir," answered the teller, "I can say nothing but what is written on the cheque. But Mr. Williams is behind you!"

"Then," said Verity angrily, "I will refer to the drawer. Sir, what does this mean?"

I smiled at him, and he turned white.

"Don't get excited, Mr. Verity. I beg you won't; pray calm yourself. Fate has been unkind to you——"

"What the devil do you mean?" he interjected.

"Mr. Verity, remember your cloth," I retorted. "Fate has been unkind. You may do your worst. For, to tell you the truth, George Saxon died last night by his own hand!"

What I said was only too true, and though I lost ten thousand pounds by Saxon acting as he did, I was glad to be able to checkmate that scoundrel Verity. He staggered back, and left the bank without another word.

Yes, George Saxon had killed himself. It happened thus: Verity having kept me until it was too late to read with him, he went off, in a frightfully nervous and excited state, to keep his engagement; there he met Dr. Vincent, who was rather brusque with him on account of some foolish remark he made. Saxon lost his head, and left the house. On returning

home, he burnt his will, and wrote to me, accusing me of being the cause of his death. He then poisoned himself.

There is no doubt that he was insane: all his friends were of that opinion; and at the inquest quite sufficient evidence was heard to justify a verdict of "Temporary Insanity." It might have been a consolation to him to know that at the trial nothing came out to destroy the reputation which he had so perilously erected, and which had crushed him to death at last. I was glad of that too, because I certainly should have been blamed for what was beyond my power to remedy; and, as I said before, I had actually come to venerate the reputation of George Saxon myself.

THE ARTIST.

THE ARTIST.

Shirley Fauriel was left just three hundred a year by his father, Thomas Fauriel, the well-known novelist. His mother, a daughter of Osborne the water-colour painter, married again after the death of Shirley's father, and the lad was thrown very much on his own resources. His step-father was not exactly hateful to him; but there is always the danger of lack of sympathy leading to bitter dislike, and Shirley anticipated fate by practically leaving home at seventeen. There was little difficulty in his obtaining sufficient money from the trustees to allow him to live simply in a small Chelsea studio, near Cheyne Walk, and he worked, while in that neighbourhood, at the South Kensington School of Art. His tastes were not extravagant; he had no particular vices; his temper was mild and a little melancholy; there was little about him that was noticeable, beyond his name. Like most sons of clever men, he seemed to lack cleverness as much as earnest activity. His fellows at the schools prophesied that he could never be an artist—no, nor even a painter, skilled in mere method. Their tolerance of him as a foredoomed failure made

him something of a solitary; he had not even that strength of self-belief, which makes those who doubt a man's power doubt themselves. His ideas, his schemes, his inner thoughts, if only put forth forcibly, might have wrought hesitation in their minds. But the only evidence he offered of himself was the work he did, and that was manifestly feeble. And very curiously, he knew it himself. This was sufficient to stamp him as outside the common run of unsuccessful men in any art. And with perpetual failure the conviction grew on him that he had chosen the wrong path in life to express himself; for he was thoroughly convinced that he possessed the soul of the born artist. At twenty-two he forsook painting. It was then that I got to know him.

Fauriel at twenty-two was slight and dark, with deep inward-looking eyes. He expressed himself bashfully in conversation; there was a certain hesitation in his speech. He said to me one day—

"Language is very difficult—or, at any rate, talking is. I suppose we express ourselves to ourselves in words?"

"That is the common, but false, opinion," I replied.

"Well, at any rate, I have always thought so. And I know perfectly what I want to say. But language is clumsy, or I am clumsy with it."

"A little of both, Fauriel; if you talked or wrote more you might find that you would get more skilful with bad material, or do as most do—content yourself with thinking only what can be expressed without trouble."

He smiled, and did not continue the talk. Yet I daresay he understood. It is easy to let words destroy thought; just as morals destroy morality, as knowledge destroys wisdom.

Whether it came from knowing me or not I cannot say, but shortly after this I found that Fauriel was trying to write. When he plucked up sufficient courage to show me some of the results, he was painfully nervous. They were essays on everything or on nothing—without style, without form, without restraint; yet there was here and there a curious suggestiveness about a single sentence. A few words were now and then almost luminous, like half-cut diamonds stuck in clay. It recalled his painting, which every now and then possessed in parts a beautiful quality of colour. Yet in both arts he possessed no true knowledge. He could do nothing twice. A rare success was followed by a ragged regiment of failures. In criticising his writing it troubled me to discourage him, and yet I could not praise his attempts. He did not even know the good

bits. I almost had to explain them to him, and then I often found out, after a laborious explanation on his part, that he meant something else. In the end, as his livelihood was always secure, I thought it no harm to suggest that he might continue. For I felt certain, when he looked at me with those sweet melancholy eyes, that there was something in him, if it could but out. He said obstinately to me one day—

"I *am* an artist; I know it."

And I said to myself, "But in what?"

He did little for three years but write, and though he managed in the end to produce something at least homogeneous, it was wholly impossible for me to regard it as a proof that he had found his method of expression. He regarded me as something of a critic, and I knew he would accept my dictum as final. That in itself was sufficient to stamp him as no born writer, for the very poorest among the tribe must believe enough in himself to scorn those who deny him the title, or, at any rate, to persevere in spite of their judgment. Fauriel accepted mine sadly.

"And yet I am an artist!" he said, as he slowly, and without passion, tore his last manuscript in two.

We were sitting in my rooms in Chelsea. On

the wall, near the door, was one of his sketches, which I had preserved as possessing some merit of colour. He rose and looked at it.

"I could not paint even so well as that now. I failed in painting. I am quite ready to believe I have failed, and must fail, in literature. But I have the feeling in me that I have something to do, to say, to make. How?"

I thought of Homer's Margites—

"Him the gods made neither a digger nor a ploughman, nor otherwise wise in aught. For he failed in every art!" But I did not wound him by repeating it. Curiously enough, he had in a kind of way impressed me with his steady persistence. And, surely, behind those eyes lay something. I liked him best when he was quite silent, for then, in my company, a curious kind of rapt exaltation sometimes took hold of him: his features became plastic, his eyes luminous; he seemed about to say something great, something new, something which would lighten up to me the dark ways of his unable mind. Once he made an odd psychological suggestion.

"Do you know that my father practically ceased to write before I was born? Yet I remember him as an imaginative man."

"I think I see what you mean," I answered. "It

is a curious possibility. If you had been born earlier, eh?"

And he nodded a little sadly.

He went back again to painting for a month, and then set out for Italy, where he remained two years. On his return he renewed his acquaintance with me. He was more melancholy than of old; though only twenty-seven, the hair upon his temples was thinning; here and there a thread of silver showed in the brown. He told me that he had tried modelling while abroad. "And," said he, with a sigh, "the sight of the quickness with which other men learnt maddened me. It was more miserable to try and to fail than to dream only. For after dreaming I only wake up to reality, but to fail is to wake up to what does not come near it. And yet——"

"You are an artist?" I asked. He nodded firmly.

"Fauriel, come now: what is an artist? Is he not the doer, not the mere dreamer? It is, after all, but a little addition that makes a man one. Some people think that an artist is entirely different from others, but I doubt it. It is a little faculty of expression superadded—if, indeed, it does not mean a subtraction. Artists may be less and may be more only by a thin, golden thread in the common clay of humanity. But the proof of the artist, however great, however

little, is the doing of something. That makes him what he is. Are you not wasting your life seeking after that which you do not possess?

"I believe you can think without words, without colour, without clay, very great things; I see it in you. But now it is time for you to live, if you like to be an artist in that. Many artists put all their art into their work, and remain brutal. Come, you have tried all material but one. Make your life an artistic whole."

I could not help speaking so, and as I walked up and down my room I saw that he was moved. He flushed, and his mouth trembled. Then, as I ceased, he turned pale again.

"And if I failed in the material 'life,' what then?"

"You cannot fail unless you greatly succeed in something which is not life. If you go from here and make money—merely money—I shall hold you have failed indeed. If you are false to your instincts you will fail. But if you are yourself, wholly and utterly yourself—if you follow yourself, are not led aside by any consideration, good, or indifferent, or evil—you will succeed. Live henceforth, and do——"

"What?" said Fauriel, with gleaming eyes. I turned on him with surprise.

"If I knew what, you would know your vocation.

It is for you to find out. Life, in this artistic sense, is wonderfully plastic. It is easy working; it needs no technique, no painful mixing of colours, no curious choice of difficult words. Paint and mould, and write yourself down in the great material that includes all materials."

We sat in silence for a long time. When he rose to go at last, he said in a low voice—

"Is not necessity in the beginning of things?"

"I do not understand you, Fauriel."

"I mean this: is not an artistic thing a whole?"

"Essentially."

"Then you prophesy of my success in the material you have chosen for me?"

"I cannot prophesy."

"Surely you may, from my past life."

"This is a new beginning, is it not?"

He sighed, and turned away.

"Let us hope so," he replied, and then he went. For some time afterwards I was greatly depressed. There was, perhaps, a certain subtle prophecy in his voice.

When I saw him again he was more sombre, but at the same time more settled in his mind, more at rest. Some time had passed since that artistic talk, for the necessities of my work took me to Belgium,

and thence to Paris. We spoke of my trip for some minutes.

"And you, Fauriel? How have you been working in the gold of life? have you chased a medallion, or used it bravely to plan a Perseus? Speak, Cellini of a neglected art!"

He looked up.

"I have done nothing, and yet something. To fulfil myself is to dream."

"But can you not act? Can you not be cruel, or kind, or something actual? Don't your dreams lead to something? What of life without love? Can you not love?"

"Can I not?" he answered, and in his voice was such a strange ring of pathetic fervour that I checked myself suddenly.

"Yes, I can love; and I do. It is part of the whole, I suppose," he added, a little bitterly.

"The whole; what whole?"

"The whole of my artistic life."

I sat in silence for a while. There was much suggestiveness in the words: much of hopeless hope, much of painful resignation.

"Does she not love you, then?"

He bent towards the fire, opening and shutting his hands nervously as he tried to speak. When he

did so it was with a fierceness I had never seen in him. That gentle nature seemed incapable of such passion.

"How can she love such a man as I am—weak, weak and unable? She is as far from me as the things I thought to do—aye, and farther, by added beauty that out-towers my thought's height."

"You express yourself well, but it is the lot of all lovers to think so, Fauriel, if they love truly. Yet it is only their ideal, added to that which is sweet in a loving woman, even to those who do not love her. To the true idealist the possibility of love for love seems the more impossible as his own power of passionate vision is more. To the lower man woman is only woman, and, as such, attainable in thought. The idealist is with difficulty convinced that his mistress can really love him, even after all sweet proof. The very proof becomes a dream. This is the perpetuation of passion. Does she know you love her?"

"Do they not say that all women know that?"

"Then why not speak to her?"

"Because I know failure is fore-fated."

He laughed bitterly.

"And if I succeeded, might it not be failure in the art you have marked out for me?"

"You are weak, Fauriel; I think you take what

is half jest for earnest. And, after all, if you want to be most completely and artistically miserable, there really seems a very good chance in marriage, to judge by the bulk of marriages."

He looked up at me.

"You were never married, were you?"

"When you die, Fauriel, you can ask John Keats if he needed actual experience to write

> 'Love in a hut, with water and a crust,
> Is (Love forgive us!) cinders, ashes, dust!'

But don't talk about me. Try your fortune with this girl, or woman, and come and tell me you are going to fail most happily. Try and be inartistic; imitate the popular novelist, who ends with a wedding when by all natural right he ought to have ended with quite another catastrophe. Come now, you must let me use the privilege of a man who for once is busy; I have three hours' work to do to-night. Say good-bye for the present, and when you come next have some good news for me."

He rose at once, and, without more talk, went. He was evidently terribly depressed. He wrote to me a week later.

"I took your advice, and of course failed. That is, I succeeded in preserving the continuity of my story. I begin to see——" and then he stopped, draw-

THE BRONZE CASTER.

THE BRONZE CASTER.

THERE is only one place in all England where they cast fine bronze work, according to the ingenious method of *cire perdue*—busts of men or women, statuettes of gay dancing girls, of grave grenadiers, light Mercuries, sweet thoughtful Psyches. All these, and more than these, I have seen standing about in Bordon's shop and yard, for Bordon is a friend of mine, and I have the right by permission to pick my way through furnace-cinders, burnt bricks and moulds that are broken and done with, until I come where he stands, grimy with smoke or white with burnt clay-dust. If you do not know Bordon's story it shall be my privilege to tell it you, for Mürger is dead, and cannot, even if he would. Besides, I am not sure that Henri took much interest in the working side of his well-loved Bohemia; perhaps he would have rather told you tales about Bordon's life in Paris, when he was a wild barbarian of a student: such as the story of the dog, or the history of the girl who climbed the ladder, and many others which I may one day tell—unless the respectabilities roar me down, for certainly

objections might be made. But no one can cry out against what I am going to put down here; certainly not a single Philistine soul can object to Bordon now, for he is settled and domestic, and very sober and sweet, in spite of his strength. If indeed he tells these light tales of continental Bohemia at night in a studio, when there is no work to be done and the stove glows dimly, competing with the flare of gas, no one can complain. For he goes back thinking of the hard times which came between those fantastic brilliant Parisian nights and the even-coloured days of this time, when he is somewhat successful and does not starve, as some of his listeners who handle other implements than crucibles and tongs do or have done. In truth, he had a sore struggle when he first worked out his fate in England, and has accordingly that right to look back and laugh which belongs to every man who fights and wins a hard battle, with nothing in his favour but the best part of himself, while all destiny seems against him. And, as I think, to succeed in being a good caster of bronze is something to be proud of. Many indeed might deem it equivalent to becoming a graduate in the Halls of Fire with Vathek, and decline the honour, not with shivering, but in a cold perspiration of fear. For Bordon is a kind of Benvenuto Cellini of a genial sort; not

fierce nor ruthless, not a *croquemitaine* nor a swash-buckler, but still of the same artistic wing-feather, upward-soaring, persevering, indomitable, steadfast; like his own furnace fire, clear-burning: made of good stuff, like his own crucibles for bronze-melting.

Let us first speak of him when he thought not of bronze-casting. Bordon was a Swiss by birth, though he may now be counted an Englishman, and at Zurich served his time in a smithy, whereby he attained to the thews and sinews that do not crack in lifting a pot of molten metal from the furnace. But he was an artist, and is, and needed other work to satisfy him than supplying the daily needs of his *commune* in horse-shoes, nuts and bolts, and the like, which, though artistic, are of the order of the pot-boiler to one of gifts calling him elsewhere. Perhaps if he could have got to gate-work, devising foliage and petals in iron and quaint grotesques of metal monsters, he might have rested there swinging his hammer, a Swiss Huntington Shaw of intricate railings and screens, till his death. But it was not to be; and he left the forge for the shop of a decorative sculptor of no great power, to do as he was bid. He knew his lack of knowledge and mourned it, but was unable, through lack of means, to gain mastery

over his material, which he began to suspect was clay. Finally, in despair, feeling that time was going on, he started for Paris, the great, the wonderful, the artistic. Back to his home in Switzerland went enthusiastic letters, which aroused other enthusiasms about the Louvre and Luxembourg. His enthusiasm, however, did not satisfy his hunger, for even artists must eat sometimes. In his need he found out a restaurant kept by a Swiss woman, gracious and pretty and patriotic, beloved by many artists who daily came there. One of them was M——, the sculptor. Bordon's kind countrywoman spoke to M—— of Bordon. Could he not come to Monsieur's studio? To her indeed M—— could refuse nothing. So the modest, stalwart young Swiss was bidden to follow. He entered the great *atelier*. "Yes, it is all yours, my young friend. Here is your place, here the clay. To work, to work! Let us see what you can do."

Though this was good, and better still when he pleased M——, it meant no money—at least, not enough to enable him to study at the Beaux Arts. Still it was great news to send home, and when he sent it patriotic pride thrilled the breasts of his many friends and acquaintances. Bordon must be a great man, and do honour to his *commune*. A society was formed at once: the Society for the Education of

Bordon, let us call it—a whole society for the raising of money to aid in the instruction of the young Switzer, who eventually was to do things redounding to the honour of the land of the Alps. Lawyers, shoemakers, doctors, tailors, tinkers, peasants, all but sailors—nay, even, may-be a lake captain—rushed forward with sums of money great and small, appointing a committee, and secretary, and honorary treasurer, who finally obtained the £200 necessary for that education at the Beaux Arts by which Bordon was to learn to teach the French. Bravo! brave Switzers, rich and poor! Ye did well, and did not in vain. For Bordon worked hard and harder yet, smiting his clay about finely, making many portraits and studies, artistic and also like. He thought then that he had the world by the tail. But the world is a very slippery fox to catch.

I must leave now some blank pages, wherein should be written his life in Paris, where he toiled, and starved, and feasted, and was idle: where he modelled in clay, and got, at times, somewhat clayey, learning things not taught at the École des Beaux Arts, nor at any University, but which are useful to a man who is not an angel, nor a salamander, to go through life's fires unscorched. But all this is to be omitted, or at least reserved; and now behold

Bordon less a Bohemian by the dismissal of his wilder days, and less still by his marriage to the sister of a brother sculptor—an amiable musician, who ran the chromatic scale up, and caught his eye and heart.

Now, of course, work grew scarce. Paris swarmed with sculptors, or was clayey with them ; there were sufficient to model the universe, and some over to stand enviously idle. So when Bordon's brother-in-law went home to England and began to look towards the success which was his due—for he was a genius in the order of image-makers—Bordon himself thought that the island might be emptier of artists than France, and have vacancies. May-be, being yet young, he imagined that all this country was in an agony to be modelled or chiselled, and set on other pedestals than mere self-conceit. Like a fisherman, he believed the big fish were on the other side of the stream, or of the Channel. However, the English desire to be immortalised was not over-manifest when he set up a studio and got his clay ready by the hundredweight, proceeding to build up the beginning of a bust in order that he might lose no time when a famous statesman, or infamous financier, or such like, should burst in and beg him to be quick, as he had something of importance to attend to. But that

prime minister, or lord mayor, or money-lender, or dust-contractor, never came, and things went not well with Bordon. Indeed, if it had not been for the singing-bird, his musical wife, whom he had netted in France, there is no saying what might have happened. And thus we come slowly to the casting of bronze, into which he drifted strangely, for the thought of it had never entered his mind. Nevertheless, Fate was preparing his furnaces, and meantime set him in a flame of adversity till he was hard and able to endure.

About this time Bordon was working for, or with, the brother of his wife, and the brother-in-law made a bust of somebody, or of nobody: it matters not—though it was probably of a nobody, as nobodies mostly predominate in this world of ours, and are quite as vain as somebodies, and usually richer. It was a question as to casting it, and the brother-in-law wanted to send it to Naples to be done there. Now here I could, by the aid of encyclopædias and books of reference, which I do not possess, but which are to be seen at the British Museum, make a very learned show, after the manner of the art-critic, on the various methods of casting, including the old *cire perdue* process used by Benvenuto Cellini, which came down in the right line from the ancient Greeks; the sand-

process employed for large work both in this country and in France, and the completed *cire perdue* as it is now used by the Neapolitans, the Florentines, and by Bordon. Cellini in employing this process used his original work instead of a mould carefully prepared from it, and thus always ran the risk of losing his labour if the casting was not good. This explains his fierce anxiety to cast the Perseus at once. But *cire perdue* as now practised admits of unlimited failures, and allows for the whole chapter of unlucky accidents. It is undoubtedly the surest, the most beautiful, most dainty method yet discovered. And of it Bordon knew nothing.

For him *cire perdue* was a lost art, and he had to discover it over again. They knew indeed everything that was to be known at Florence and Naples ; but the secrets of the process were carefully guarded, and none might enter the workshops or furnaces. It is true the Swiss might read something in a book ; but that was little more than a hint, seeing that he who wrote perhaps knew no more of the strange complications of practice than I do who here put down Bordon's trials, his patience, his failures, his perseverance, his ardour, and his final success. For when the brother-in-law suggested Naples, Bordon reflected, and made answer : " Have we

no knowledge of this art? Then let us try to discover it."

They went to work at once, both of them, striving hard at a furnace they built themselves. They procured the metal and melted it, and having made their moulds, tried the casting with fear and trembling. And they very naturally failed. The moulds broke, the metal ran, but ran wrong, their knowledge being insufficient. After a while, and a few more dismal results, the brother-in-law retired into the country, on the whole rather disgusted with casting, counselling retreat from the fiery enterprise, and again recommending experienced Naples.

Bordon, however, could not see things in that light. He had become tough, not to be bent or broken; and, moreover, he now saw a chance to be Somebody and to do things. Failure, forsooth! What of failure? To fail is to learn. So he begged, and borrowed, and scraped together sufficient money to try again. Again he failed.

Now his helpers failed too: failed in courage as they had in hope; and he was hard put to it keeping them up to the mark. "Well, then," said they at last, "one more chance you shall have; but if you do nothing this time, it must be Naples."

Bordon shrugged his shoulders—by no means intending to give up even if matters again went wrong. Yet he swore they should not, and vowed that the Neapolitans should die if their living depended on his yielding them that bust. He would cast it, or himself die by a broken mould or a cracked crucible. So he worked with the utmost care and the utmost thought, took every precaution, made everything secure against the faintest chances. Again he fired his re-built furnaces, and in them melted metal, true to smaller experiments, and poured it hopefully into a carefully made, strongly boxed-up mould. Then in the morning he broke the secret thing out of its casing, unearthed it, and found it perfect, unflawed, fine-coloured, just and true to the cold original clay standing by. And the brother-in-law in the country retreat was delighted—so his telegram said. As for Bordon, he was as happy as Belzoni discovering ancient statues in a desert. He stroked his beard, and was quiet.

Then came a discussion. Who was to be who in the new business—the new-old business of *cire perdue* casting? Was Bordon to be man or master? He was determined to be Somebody, a name in the firm, not hidden under a contemptible Co. And there was a crack, an explosion, in the proposed

fusion. He and his brother-in-law did not mix truly like copper and tin to make good bronze; and the worker set up for himself, to do what no other could do.

Now, in Chelsea, in an inconsiderable street which for other artistic reasons than bronze-casting may yet be historic, stood, and stands, a long row of studios and sheds devoted to sculpture both pure and decorative. At the far end was a shed in the yard, and this Bordon took, renting it of the sculptor who occupied the studio. What it was like then I cannot say, but now it is magnificent in disorder. The furnace-shed stands against the outer street wall, and though it is ill-built and like to fall, the subsidiary shed behind it, with a passage-way in between, is more ramshackle still, being made of odds and ends of old boards, rotten timbers, and empty window-frames. Past that, through the inner broken wall, is an old deserted garden, picturesque with a cracked fountain dimly outlined in high grass, and a little broken conservatory whose top shows jets and spurts of a vine run wild. In the far end of the yard are burst packing-cases, smashed moulds, and blocks of building-stone, unshaped by the mason, and marked with the name of the port whence they were shipped. There is near at hand a rusty-wheeled stone lorry, or

waggon; again more stone, and then a dogless deserted kennel with old timbers, bent iron red and rusty, and an ivy-covered wall. The whole scene is one of fierce wild disorder, save just the part where work is done. And this is the spot where Bordon worked, and works now when the stove-pipe chimney running through the thin leaky roof shoots a blue flame into the air, deluding midnight travellers into giving a wild alarm of fire. Then Bordon is casting something with reasonable assurance that it will come out right. But when he first began it was failure, failure, and failure. Do not talk of Bernard Palissy; I know Bordon. Nor of that religious ruffian, Benvenuto; for I know Bordon, the Bronze Caster, who took that little shed, sending forth word that Florence and Naples were to have a rival in Chelsea, which had added another to its many arts of painting, sculpture, poetry, what not.

Yet one bust does not make a successful business, and there was enough of chance in the perfect casting of that sufficient specimen to render successors doubtful. Metal is tricky, and Bordon did not know everything about the difficult relations of quantity to colour. Too little tin, the metal would not easily run; too much, it was too white; zinc rendered it fluent, but in excess spoilt the rich tint that makes

bronze. Then moulds crack, the plaster may be wrong, ever so little wrong, and nothing goes right. The wax, the lost or to be lost wax—whence the name *cire perdue*—was difficult of manufacture, hard to discover empirically or scientifically in proper proportions; the cooking of the mould, to make it run out and leave room for the inflowing metal, was by no means easy. There is but one right way, and a thousand wrong. But experiment taught him, and failure did more than success; though Fate, who is often hard on the artist, was hard enough on Bordon trying to outwit destiny and cast himself as the Bronze Caster, to be set up on a moderate pedestal of modest success.

His luck at first was assuredly bad, and bad luck meant suffering for himself and his wife. What money was made she supplied, and lent to him for more trials. And the poor devil wasted it on experiments, growing thin, and gaunt, and hollow-eyed, till his muscles hung on his wasted limbs, loose like the lee-rigging of a ship. His musical wife could not always be musical; she grew dissonant and sang discords at him, being out of tune, as wives are when man and wife are not kept together by the tuner, Same Desire. To tell the truth, Mrs. Bordon did not care a demi-semiquaver for bronze casting, and

thought *cire perdue* waste of time as well as of wax. Yet, being a good little woman and persuadable, she gave money time after time to this striver after art turned rhetorician at night-time. But it was once a near touch with him.

I have incidentally, or of forethought, told you something of the method. Remember, Bordon knows it now, and has told me, if not connotatively, at least denotatively, and I have watched him go deftly, knowledgeably about his work. He has trained men under him, who know needful things, even to the due placing of an inconsiderable brick, who can tell suddenly a scrap of tin from a scrap of zinc in the dark—which is no mean thing to know, seeing that a little too much zinc would make the bronze over yellow and spoil the casting's colour. But then, when Bordon needed money of the wife to whom he now gives it all was ignorance: the methods of furnace-building, the right sort of crucible, the due proportion of metal, the proper tools for lifting red-hot pots. The ways of putting wax in the mouldings, the kind of wax, everything has to be so exactly right when everything can so easily go wrong. So Bordon found when he worked consecutively for full fifty hours in his furnace-shed, so intent as to forget food, with snow on the ground and heavy snow bulging in

the frail roof, which threatened to catch fire. He had taken—by what methods of inventor's rhetoric or marital coaxing I know not—some six pounds from his musically artistic wife, who disbelieved in her plastically artistic husband, and with it had bought metal and other necessary things. He did not come home that night, and being so occupied, sent no word. Meanwhile she played and sang with her pupils, and, like Bordon in another way, was likely enough out of time, and then went home to a home which was full five miles from Chelsea, and found him not. If she had been less tired, if it had not been so heavy a sky of threatening and actual snow, she would have gone to see this demon of a fire, this fiend of a furnace, consume her hardly earned gold—gold with difficulty sung for and played for. But go she could not, and Bordon furnaced it all night, striving with metals and moulds in vain. He was in a fever, gaunt with hunger that he did not feel, yet faint with it, and with vast heat and the long strain. Yet he watched the wax cooked out, not having yet discovered how to keep up the fire without watching it, as he has done now, and at last the casting was finished. It takes some time for the metal to set sufficiently to be broken out of the mould, but he was so anxious that a little more time did not matter.

He waited—and it was a failure, for want of enough metal.

Then the Caster put on his coat, and without money started for home. It was two in the morning—the morning, mind, of the second night; the wind was keen and angry in the desolate streets, the snow flew and drifted into corners, shrinking from a colder than itself, and Bordon began his five-mile walk. He was starving and was very cold, being of course thinly clad; he had left a place as hot as Hades, as an Inferno of fire. He felt very weak; his limbs trembled a little; sometimes his lips trembled too. It is a hard thing to be near success and fail, to work so hard and fail, to believe in oneself and fail: especially when others depend on a man when the weather is bitter and bad, when there is no money in the house, and most likely no food. But the poor Bronze Caster was so weary, and grew so much wearier, that at last he ceased to think, and plodded dully, almost mechanically, through the heaped snow homewards: in some such kind of waking sleep as overtakes a worn-out sentry, or a tired sailor on the watch looking blindly into a cold night.

But at half-past three he came to his own street and his own house. The windows were all dark, and he knocked. He stayed and waited, wishing that he

had a key, to save his wife the trouble of rising on such a night to let him in. She was very hard to wake, and heard nothing. To say the truth, the poor woman had gone to bed weary and worn out with waiting for him whom she had not seen for two days. She had some bitter thoughts, too. Was he really working during all those two long wintry nights? It seemed hardly likely, she said. She did not yet know Bordon, though he was her husband: she thought thus as she fell asleep in great fatigue. And he knocked in vain. Presently he ceased, and the street seemed to grow dimmer. As he lifted his tired hand again, the knocker strangely slid out of his reach high above him, and he knelt in the snow, presently scrambling in a half-dream upon the step, thinking, "Yes, yes, she will come in a moment!" But being very sound asleep, she had heard nothing, and did not come. It seemed as if she would make sad music in the morning. For he, the fire-fighter, was grappling unconsciously with the subtler demon of cold—and bitter cold it was as the snow fell upon him, lodging in his beard, turning the dark rich brown to grey. He was certainly in much danger of never conquering the *cire perdue* process, for fire and cold together would conquer him. But at last he woke up suddenly in great bewilderment, to find

himself in the middle of the street, and in custody. Two great policemen were escorting the homeless vagabond to a cell. With some difficulty he persuaded his reluctant captors that he had been sleeping on his own doorstep, and being at last convinced, they knocked for him with a force and persistence which finally brought the sleeper down stairs. The poor man's welcome was a chill one. Next day, after bestowing on him some meekly endured reproaches, she went to a certain shop, outside of which hung the Medicean arms, and thereby procured something to exchange for a meal. But it was not a happy feast for the poor Bronze Caster.

In spite of all, he was not beaten, and would not be. As nothing had been wrong in that last casting but an insufficiency of metal, he tried again, and with success. Henceforth he made a little, and was not always foiled. Yet his chapter of accidents was not closed. Once his men got drunk, whether by natural bent or intolerance of almost intolerable heat cannot be known, and as he sprang on the furnace and grasped the great crucible, heaving it upward from the terrible fire, they lacked sense and readiness to ease him with the bar. As they fumbled, the heat penetrated his boots and burnt him into blisters,

baking him terribly. So he was laid up in bed for months—a disabled Titan under a very mountain of calamity.

That was in the summer—the summer of 1888—and when Bordon left off groaning a bass accompaniment to his wife's song of cheer—for now she believed in him, and the nights spent with his hardly wooed flame-bride—he returned once more to his crazy, creaky, leaky shed, intent on more busts that waited in rows for him, fearing Florence or Naples and a dangerous sea-voyage. Them he accomplished one by one, bronze bust or group, until a thick and heavy snow came. I myself, who here speak of Bordon, remember how I spent that night with a certain writer of stories who with me stormed impossible intrenchments of fancy with a facile logic, until at last I drew aside the curtains and looked out on sheeted streets and ghostly roofs artistically carved by the wind. With urgent need of being miles off, I found the roads deserted and impassable, the stations blocked, the rails blocked, the telegraph-posts down with thick entanglements of loose trap-like nooses, speaking vain messages to the earth. And as I strove homeward through the gale, the snow fell quietly to work on Bordon's shed, and drifted in through crack and crevice, lying heavier and heavier

still on the bending roof, until it fell upon cold furnaces and dull black tools, burying everything in indistinguishable ruin. So disaster on disaster came to him; he fought against all the elements: Rain and Fire, Snow and Wind.

When the shed was rebuilt, still another accident happened to him. The pan of melting wax, being prepared for a great bust, suddenly caught fire, and the men fled, thinking it impossible to go near it. Bordon rushed in, grasped the pan with tongs in all the blinding heat and flame, which spurted upon him, singeing away eyebrows, eyelashes, and beard, making great blisters on his face and hands, and brought it into the open air, saving the shed which had been with difficulty rebuilt.

When he had again recovered there was brought a group to be cast, and on the very night of the melting the snow again assaulted his stronghold of fire, which seemed to burn doubly and trebly fierce—a Vulcan against a sky Scamander of snow and sleet and rain. As the bending roof cracked, his friends and helpers reared poles to support it. Then flame leapt up and touched the hot wood, whose openings hissed with melted snow. The sculptor of a neighbouring studio, then watching, rushed for his syringe, whose stream, sprayed widely with an opposing finger, was wont to

moisten great clay sketches ere the damp cloths were nightly wrapped about them, and with it played the fireman, lifting his branch-pipe against crackling wood. With this help Bordon again won his fight, though almost beaten at the last lift of the crucible.

Now, indeed, he began to know and to grow cunning. Moulds never cracked with him ; the wax ran as true as the metal, which now was always rightly coloured ; only insufficient cash or gold (which even a bronze caster cannot get to run very fluently) hindered him from building, or buying, or hiring a more sufficient place of work. Material surroundings might check him : never lack of necessary knowledge, nor lack of courage, nor lack of endurance. Mark him now as I show him to you side by side with a born, bred, learned furnace-man.

The need came once to cast a certain bust in white metal—rather, perhaps, from the fancy of the artist than for its beauty, which, in most cases, we may well doubt, since it can by no means gain such a patina or oxide crust, whether by age or acid, as the true, many-tinted bronze ; and Bordon, thinking it not worth while to learn by failure to mix what was but once wanted, sent north to Sheffield for a man cunning in the lighter coloured stuff. He came, viewed the shed and furnace with contempt, and yet with some

wonder. Who could work with such wretched constructions, in such a spot, with such vile tools? Not he; and yet he respected Bordon, who did somewhat with them, lacking better. He was to have money to cast this, to mix the metal rightly. The latter he did; but when the furnace glowed hot and hotter, red, and then white, fierce and yet feeble, shaky and almost crumbling, like an aged man still aflame with the inspiration of genius, though nigh unto death, he turned, shuffled, denied, shook his head, was recalcitrant, and refused to handle tongs or crucible. And Bordon, the artist in modelling, the amateur in casting, said nothing; but he put things in due order, placed the steps against the furnace, mounted them, grasped the metal pots, and drew them up, the glare illuminating him, but leaving all else in darkness, while the professional furnace-man rather sullenly admired him, though putting his daring down to an amateur's ignorance rather than to proved courage. Perhaps he was right, after all, for Bordon did get burnt once, as we have seen; and any day I may hear that the fire has got the best of him: for fire-taming and lion-taming are alike dangerous arts, and both may rise in unexpected wrath, roaring and showing fiery teeth and claws.

Even Bordon himself thinks so as he steps ever

and again into the arena, and throws open the gates where the great wild beast breathes hotly upon him. Do you remember the old father in "The Last Days of Pompeii" watching his son, the gladiator, fighting when defeat meant death and victory meant liberty? Now Bordon has a friend, a carver, or modeller, or what not: an oldish man, grey and strong and square, who had often patted him on the back, giving him many examples of historic perseverance when failure beset him. Let this friend stand for the father, and Bordon for the son and gladiator; and see the older man, silent in the corner of the casting-house, seated hour after hour on the same loose pile of bricks I have sat upon to watch Bordon, now victorious and full of knowledge. But his friend watched him when triumphs were won hardly—when he was now cast down and now greatly hoping. Did the furnace burn well? Then the worker sat up and glared triumphant. Did Bordon fear the metal would not run? Then the eager head sank down upon the hand, hiding eyes as the father did when the shouts in the arena made him fear for his son's life. But now it seems that the metal is fluent, it runs, and there is sufficient; and when at last, after anxious waiting, the mould is broken and the hot bust is found perfect, both worker and watcher dance a wild dance of triumph,

free from anxiety once more. The gladiator is victorious.

Perhaps, reader, you may now complain that you have not grasped the whole method of *cire perdue*, and mutter that I have been like Florence or Naples—chary of letting you into the secrets. I have not even said a word about patina, and its preparation with acid, or salt, or the blow-pipe, or sal-ammoniac. Perhaps it may be so, but I meant not to give you cold facts, but rather the warm man, living and on fire. If I have indeed done well you should see him as I saw him but a few nights ago, leaping on his furnace, armed with great tongs or pincers, damp-browed, glittering-eyed, with the hot glare strong upon him, until the lifted crucible shone white and electric in the shed's darkest corner. You should see his men rush with ready bar to relieve him, taking the weight from his strained muscles, and then behold him raking the oxide from the carefully-tilted pot, and pouring the clean fierce stream into the mould whose wax was yesterday baked out. To-morrow the sculptor may come down to Chelsea, and look at his work in its final foreseen material, wanting only the patina which Bordon knows as part of the fine bronze art—knows as he knows the rest: by trial, by perseverance, by experiment, by failure. He knows, as we should all

know—if indeed we be artists—that the time lost by such failures is no more wasted or in vain than the lost wax which melts away between the outer mould and inner core, and lets the hot metal of our thought and work run in fluently, to be broken out as something fit and able to endure.

EXLEX.

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DURING the great war which ended in the creation of the Dutch Republic, whose story has been so admirably told by Motley, it is well known that race hatred between the dominant Spaniards and insurgent Netherlanders reached a pitch of bitterness rarely equalled in the history of the world. A simple fight for freedom may afford examples of ferocity enough to make even an idealist despair of his vain ideal man, in which the animal is wholly subdued; but when that struggle is maddened by adverse religious feelings, in an age when religion was still a great war force and a provocation to armed proselytising, it is difficult for the imagination to surpass the reality of possible horror. Motley gives us a curious instance of a hand-to-hand combat between a Dutchman and a Spaniard, in which the former was victorious. He cut the slain man's heart out, fastened his teeth in it, and threw it away with the exclamation—"Faugh, it is too bitter!" That heart was long preserved in a museum. We know its history. But Motley tells another story, the sequel

of which he never knew. A certain Spanish officer was to be hanged at the Hague, and the professional hangman was dead. The office of Jack Ketch was not eagerly sought after in those days. There was no eager rivalry for the position in that rude fighting society. It needs a great advance in civilisation for the executioner to become a personage not unworthy of notes on his previous career when he takes office—not to be deprived of the due of all public servants, an obituary in a daily newspaper, when Nature executes him in his turn. It was urgent to hang the Spaniard; revenge and policy dictated his death, the citizens were eager to see an example made of one of a hated race. Yet no one volunteered to accept the stigma attached to the performance of this public duty. For some time there was a chance of the wretched Spaniard obtaining the grudged meed of a more honourable death: a file of soldiers might be called in. No one could then say that any one man was the executioner. And, moreover, the death which is not disgraceful to the slain man is curiously enough never so disgraceful to the doer. At last it occurred to an ingenious citizen that there was a Hollander lying in gaol who had been condemned for murder. The same cause which respited the Spaniard respited him. Yet his was not a case of urgency. It was

proposed that the murderer should be set free on condition of his hanging the Spaniard.

Jan Vanderkopf was not a criminal of the Barnardine type, so admirably suggested by Shakespeare in a few words. He was passably intelligent, yet with an intelligence which at its acutest was rather cunning than intellectual ; he was in face not at once disagreeable ; only careful study of him in his milder moods might have suggested the latent ferocity which led him to murder a rival for the affections of a young peasant girl who worked on the next farm to his own. The murder was brutal, was carefully planned, and carefully carried out. But his care only extended to the extermination of the man he hated : his precautions against discovery were characteristic of the undeveloped class to which the commoner murderer belongs. He was suspected at once, arrested, proved to be guilty, and condemned. The sentence was received callously. He seemed satisfied that the man he hated was dead : he was only sorry that he had not killed the girl as well.

When Jan was disturbed late at night by the visit of the deputy governor and chief warder of the gaol, it was natural for him to imagine that he was about to die : that in his short sleep he had come to early morning. Yet it was but midnight. He sat

up on his straw, and glared about him savagely for a moment. Then catching sight of his own warder, Steen, with whom he was on friendly terms, he gave a half grin. "Well, Steen, you have found your hangman, then? But, curse it! isn't this early to wake a man? What's the hour?"

Steen, from behind the officials, shook his head. The deputy governor spoke.

"You know, Jan Vanderkopf, that your life is forfeited to justice, that long ere this you would have been executed if it had not been for want of an executioner to replace Nicholas?"

"This is old news," muttered Jan, drawing his blanket up to his chin.

"You and another condemned prisoner occupy the same position. Yet there is some hope for you. There is none for him."

Jan dropped his blanket again, and stared hard at the speaker.

"We can find no one to perform the office of hangman. I am empowered by authority to offer you your liberty if you will take it upon yourself."

There was silence in the narrow cell for a minute. Jan stirred uneasily in his straw; a little foam issued from the corners of his mouth. Then he turned very pale.

"Come," said the chief warder impatiently; "don't keep his Excellency waiting: your answer."

"It shall never be said that my mother bore a hangman," answered Jan, with a curious quietness of voice. "I'll be hanged first myself! Go away, and let me sleep."

The reply was unexpected, and the governor looked at Jan with an expression which in a degree betokened a certain respect. This murderer was not wholly degraded.

"This is your final answer, then? You prefer to die rather than hang a man, yet——"

Jan looked up with a quick comprehension.

"I hated the man I killed!"

"Would you have hanged him?"

Jan hesitated a moment.

"Like enough," he muttered at last.

"You are, at any rate, a Netherlander? Have you ever fought the Spaniards?"

The murderer turned up the sleeve of his right arm, and bared a big scar. He looked at it almost affectionately.

"At Maestricht," he said proudly.

"The man we want you to hang is a Spaniard."

"Ha!" said Jan, and he half rose. He again turned pale. He looked appealingly at Steen, as

though asking his advice. The man made no sign. "No; they would call me a hangman. I will not; I will not!" And yet a great struggle went on within him. The perspiration came in heavy drops upon his forehead. He waved his hand, as if asking for time.

"If I do this," he said at last, "it will not save me. Someone will taunt me with the deed, and I shall kill him, and then you will hang me, after all." He stopped and muttered to himself. "Give me leave hereafter to kill anyone who shall call me 'Hangman,' and I will hang your Spaniard. That's my answer."

He threw himself down on the straw, and refused to speak again.

In the morning the deputy governor brought Jan Vanderkopf, under the seal of the State, permission to kill any man who should hereafter taunt him with his deed. That afternoon the Spaniard died, and Jan returned to his farm. So much of this story John Lothrop Motley, the historian, knew; but of the hangman murderer's after-career he tells nothing.

While Jan was in prison his mother had died—partly from old age, but more through the shock of his trial and condemnation. He found himself a lonely man. All the neighbours knew of the bargain he had driven with the authorities in their need, and

fearing a man of his proved character, they treated him with the respect that springs from terror. The paper, with its heavy seals, which set him, in one respect at least, above and beyond the law, was a terrible weapon in the hands of a desperate man. He occupied the position of one who wields unknown forces. A stranger hearing men speak of Jan might have thought him one who dealt in magic, who could waste and wither his enemies by undiscoverable means. To the very children he became a bugbear; and mothers used him to procure obedience, as other ignorant peasants use imaginary bogeys, in which they themselves half believe.

Upon Jan himself the effect of his new position was very great. For the first time in his life he tasted real power: and power to one who has never known it is very sweet. But he was not naturally a lonely man; the isolation which was forced upon him became almost intolerable. The innate brutality which led to his first crime throve and grew in silence and solitude; he became cruel in thought and cruel in action. His horses suffered, his dog feared him; he had to use what were almost threats to procure any assistance in harvest time. In company he was boisterous, and he often drank heavily; though the innkeepers round about found his custom led to

actual loss, they were obliged to put up with him. Occasionally he produced the paper which he always carried with him, and asked a trembling host if he had any objection to his company, and, if so, what that objection might be. He insisted on men remaining who wished to go. He forced them to drink at his expense.

The girl whose lover he had killed still lived in the neighbourhood; but for a year after his release from prison he never saw her. Had he not been so hideously lonely, he might never have wished to see her: in solitude she returned to him. It was possible that she had not really loved the dead man: it was possible he had taken a wrong view. At any rate, he got to feel so strong, so far above the cringing peasants about him, that he thought his new strange power might affect her even if she hated him—if she did hate him, he said, and then stopped. He remembered how his only regret in prison was that he had not killed her. She was the cause of all his troubles. She had made him a murderer, had made him a hangman; the only recompense was his being set above the law. She had done that; she had given him the power of killing her if she taunted him, or if he ever found her alone. He chuckled to think of it.

If he found her alone! Yes; and if he killed her or anyone else when no one was by, who could say the victims had not brought their death upon themselves? Sometimes he fancied others had thought of this: it was so rare for him to see any of his neighbours by themselves. He laughed again; and strangely fortified in his natural strength and audacity, he thought that even then he had but to kill two instead of one. He began to desire to kill.

One morning he rose early, dressed himself more carefully than usual, and went towards the farm where this woman worked. He put a sharp knife in his breast pocket. He only reached the homestead at ten o'clock, for it was fully fifteen miles from his own house. He sat down under some small trees, about a hundred yards from the barn and stables. Presently he saw a woman leave the house and enter the barn. Was that Anna? He rose, and, running quickly, went in after her. She turned and saw him. Staggering back against the wall, she covered her face with her hands, as though to shut out some awful sight. The hot blood surged into Jan's head. He fingered the haft of his knife.

"What do you want?" said the woman, without looking at him.

He stared at her fiercely, and then a revulsion came over him.

"I don't know," he answered almost vacantly.

"Then go, then go!" and she shuddered violently.

"I want," said Jan—and again the blood came to his brain—"I want you. Come with me. I am all alone. You have done this. People hate me, and are afraid; yes, they are afraid!"

The woman looked up and stared at him steadily.

"And I? Don't I hate you? What have you done to me? Where is my man—the man who loved me? Go! you devil, you devil!"

He staggered, and caught hold of a post to save himself from falling. Recovering as she again turned away, he came up to her close—closer yet. He breathed hotly upon her, and she shrank away like a flower under a fire. He touched her and she screamed faintly, and said "Ah!" with horrible loathing.

"Let me go, you devil! You murderer, let me go! You vile wretch!"

And she wrenched herself from his grasp. He had caught her arm. She panted, and thought how to hurt him.

"You hangman murderer, let me go!"

How Jan hated her then. All the old strong passion was changed into hate. He would have liked

to slay her lover again before her eyes. He caught her by the throat, and fumbled for his knife. He stabbed her once, twice, thrice, and let her fall. The first blow had pierced her heart. He stood over her for a full long minute, hearing the horses champing hay in the near stable. A hen chuckled loudly about a new egg; a sparrow looked down from the upper door; a swallow darted in, turned, and flew out. He saw them all. And Anna lay there, dead! He wiped the knife on a bit of hay, felt its edge curiously, and returned it to his pocket. Going out, he closed the barn door. In half the time he had taken to come he was at home again. He sat down, and read and read again the paper with its heavy blood-red seals.

For this murder Jan was arrested and tried. He held his tongue, and did not confess. The evidence against him was nothing but the possession of a knife similar to the one which must have been used by the slayer. No one had seen him on his way; no one had noted his return. It was so greatly his habit to remain in his house for days, that it was quite possible he had done so on that day. Greater scientific knowledge than was common in those times might have detected human blood on his knife and upcn his clothes. But a verdict which set him free rendered it unnecessary for him to accuse the dead woman

of the insult which, in his own eyes, made murder justifiable, and in the eyes of the law, in his case at least, legal.

Nevertheless, everyone was firmly convinced that he had killed this woman. He was shunned as if he had the plague; no one, save in company, came near him. He was looked on as absolutely and hideously dangerous; only real personal fear made any man remain with him. This perpetual avoidance set his teeth on edge. All men were his enemies. He needed no further cause to desire to kill them. He began to lie in wait on unfrequented paths, hoping that some man he knew would pass by alone. Murder was in his thoughts by night and day: murder that was easy, and not dangerous. He sometimes was proud to think that he alone in all the world possessed the right and the power to kill; he laughed uproariously in his desolate home, which was more and more neglected. He very rarely worked; his clothes hung in rags about him; he was gaunt and ghastly to look at.

One evening he entered the village inn, though of late he had ceased to frequent it. The noisy chatter ceased as soon as he came in—ceased so suddenly that he felt they had been talking of him. He ordered some brandy, drank it, ordered some more,

and invited three men to drink with him. They dared not refuse. Presently he turned to the crowd, and said savagely, "Why don't you go on talking, you pack of curs? Are you afraid of me?"

And those who were most afraid made an attempt at conversation. He took a seat. The man next him edged a little away. Jan pushed close up against him, and glared at him angrily. The host asked Jan to drink, and he drank again.

Presently he took his knife out of his pocket, and began chipping at the table with it, muttering to himself. It was the same knife he had used to kill Anna with, and had an edge like a razor. One of his favourite amusements was sharpening it. It was greatly worn away, and curved along the edge from the point to the haft in a slight concave. Again silence fell on the assembled company. Once or twice Jan attempted to speak, but he got no further than the first word. Presently he rose and went out. In the morning, on the road near his house, a man called Jacob Brant was found dead, stabbed to the heart. He was a labourer on the next farm, and was one of those who feared Jan the least.

Jan was arrested, and acknowledged the crime, but he said that the man had refused to walk with him, and had taunted him with the Spaniard's death.

He produced his precious paper, and was reluctantly acquitted. The magistrates and doctors consulted together. Some said he was mad, but of his madness there was no proof. But it began to be hinted through the country that any man who killed Jan Vanderkopf would find justice very easy to deal with.

For three months he never entered the village hostelry; but late one evening he came at last. The old scene was repeated; he bade them talk, he drank heavily, he took out his knife and played with it. A curious and horrible murmur and a quiet question ran round the bar-room: "Whom had he killed now?" Each looked at each; they tried to think if there was any of their usual company missing. Presently a tall young labourer, Hans Cuyp, rose, with a curious sound in his throat; he stared about him as if dazed, and ran to the door. Jan cried to him to stop, and followed him to the door. But Hans had disappeared into the darkness. Jan returned to his seat and laughed a long laugh, which made the rest shiver. But it was curious to note that he shivered too as he sat there.

In half-an-hour the door was pushed away, and Hans Cuyp entered. He was ghastly white, and his clothes were covered with mud. The heavy rain had soaked him through and through. He did not look

round, but went to the bar, and motioned for some brandy. He drank it and turned round. His right hand he kept in his pocket. He spoke—

"Friends and neighbours, and you, Jan Vanderkopf, neighbour and no friend, my brother Frans lies dead, not fifty yards from that man's door, stabbed through the heart." He pointed with his left hand at Jan, who sat motionless. His knife was sticking in the table in front of him. There rose a curious odd sound, half like a sigh, from those who heard him. Yet there was something threatening in it. Everyone turned to Jan, who stood looking at Hans. The silence lasted for some seconds.

"Jan Vanderkopf," said the brother of the murdered man, "you are a murderer, and a foul villain, and a hangman! Stand up, for I am going to kill you!" And in his right hand he held a knife.

Jan looked steadily at his accuser, but did not move.

"I can kill you for that," he said at last, in a thick voice, which sounded afar off. He seemed half stupefied. He fumbled in his breast, and took out his safe-guard: his licence to kill. He began to read it out. When he came to "If anyone shall hereafter taunt the said Jan Vanderkopf," he stopped suddenly, put his hand to his head, and looked

round as if in great surprise—as if not knowing where he was. The paper dropped from his hands, and he fell back into his seat, closing his eyes. He did not move for full five minutes of silence, and his breathing became stertorous. The nearest man plucked up courage, and, taking the deadly knife from the table, threw it in the fire. When Jan came to himself next morning he was paralysed, and in three days he was dead.

A NOBLE GERMAN.

A NOBLE GERMAN.

BARON STRUDELWITZ was born about 1850, and his family was reckoned extremely respectable among the other noble lines of North Germany until Karl commenced his career, and tarnished the lustre of an ancient name. His father died while he was still very young, and doubtless the lack of strong parental control and the fondness of a weak and loving mother contributed to the evil development of a character which was by inheritance reckless, and is now almost uncontrollable and without conscience. After leaving the military school for the army, which is the natural and almost inevitable career for all Germans who belong to the highest classes, Strudelwitz came into possession of a fortune of £15,000, which he proceeded to dissipate with such extreme despatch that he soon earned a name for wild debauchery among men who were his seniors in years and vice. By the time his affairs were in the most desperate condition the Franco-Prussian War broke out, and he served with a regiment of Uhlans at Wörth, Sedan, and in many minor affairs, showing a capacity and courage which

went far to reconcile his superiors to his outrageous conduct in barracks. When peace was made his regiment was stationed at Strasbourg. Public feeling in the conquered provinces of Alsace and Lorraine was extremely bitter, and though the hatred of the Alsatians for the Prussians was no more concealed than prudence made necessary, the military and civil authorities endeavoured to conciliate those who had been worsted in the war by giving the strictest orders that the townspeople were to be treated with the utmost gentleness and consideration. This Strudelwitz instantly obeyed by getting into a violent altercation with a harmless citizen, and after provoking anger by an undeserved insult, he avenged himself by drawing his sword aud cutting his opponent down. He was placed under arrest, and recommended to resign.

Being without money, he was compelled to favour his mother with his company for a whole year, at the end of which time his conduct made her so anxious to see him employed somewhere else, that she used the united influence of her family in obtaining him a lieutenancy in a Hussar regiment stationed in the north of Germany. Strudelwitz, being tired of rustic life, was repentant, and swore emphatically to behave himself in a respectable and quiet fashion, but after

three months of experience in garrison, his colonel, in disgust at his "quiet" behaviour, which threatened to demoralise all the younger members of the corps, sent him to a little town where only a single squadron was stationed. But Strudelwitz was incorrigible. His captain had no influence over him, and was fain to let matters take their course, with the result that the burgomaster of the town complained publicly of his arrogance and violent conduct, and his words were repeated to the offender. Next day the insulted baron was driving two young horses in the main street, and in front of him, picking his way through the mud, he saw the representative of the town's civil authority. He whipped up his horses and drove over him. Fortunately, the burgomaster was not seriously injured, but Strudelwitz had to resign once more, and returned to his disconsolate mother, with whom he stayed until the Russo-Turkish War broke out.

He had long been pricking up his ears at the thunder muttering among the Balkans, and he thought this was an opportunity not to be lost. Having obtained a small supply of money from his relations, who were glad enough to see him go where he might possibly meet with an accident which would prevent his return, he started for Constantinople to offer his services as a cavalry officer to the Turks. But as

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Oliver Goldsmith forgot that some knowledge of Dutch was necessary to teach the Hollanders English, Strudelwitz likewise forgot that to obtain the command of a Turkish regiment—for he flew at high game—it was imperative that he should have some command of the Turkish language. The authorities were polite to him when they pointed this out, but that was all, and Strudelwitz was soon a hanger-on at the German embassy.

When his fellow-countrymen became sufficiently tired of him to give him money to go away with, instead of leaving the country, he went north to Adrianople, for he considered it absurd to quit Turkey without seeing anything that was going on, to say nothing of the loss of the many chances he might have at the theatre of war. But he got no farther than a little village on the outskirts of Adrianople, where he stayed at a wayside inn until his money was exhausted, and the Turks retreated before the advancing Russians. He was sitting there in a melancholy mood when some Tcherkesse and Cossack regiments entered the town, and one detachment came to his inn. A handsome young officer entered his room and sat down. Strudelwitz took no notice, and went on smoking and drinking, until at last the curiosity of the stranger was aroused. It was evident

that this was a European, and probably a German. He was certainly a soldier: his cloak, boots and spurs, and military bearing told all observers that. Perhaps it might be the Russian's duty to make him a prisoner. He accosted Strudelwitz in German.

"Pray, sir," said he politely, "may I inquire what you are doing here?"

"Nothing whatever," replied Strudelwitz coolly; "only I can't get away."

"Why not?" asked the Russian.

"Simply because I have no horse, and owe this cursed Armenian innkeeper—whom the devil take!—fifty francs, and I have no more than five."

The Russian smiled.

"Then you are not in the Turkish army, I can see, or that would not trouble you. I perceive you are in difficulties: that you are an officer and a gentleman. Allow me to introduce myself. I am Baron Kosakoff."

Strudelwitz rose.

"And I Baron Strudelwitz, late of the — German Hussars," said he.

The two barons shook hands, and Strudelwitz, who, like all adventurers, was easily elated, felt already in a much happier frame of mind. He related his story, and it lost nothing in the telling.

"Come," said Kosakoff, when he had finished, "I will get you a horse, and you shall be one of us. I have plenty of money; I beg you to share all things with me while we are together, and——"

"After that the deluge!" cried Strudelwitz, who was in delightful spirits at hearing such a generous speech.

At all times he was an admirable companion, an inimitable *raconteur*, a *bon viveur* of the first water, and being now extremely desirous of pleasing his new companions, he even excelled himself. Round the camp fire that night the grey beards of the Tcherkesse and Cossack officers wagged until nearly morning. They swore with strange oaths that he was the most amusing man they had ever known, and the most delightful, for he told them wonderful stories of the great French war, of his German brother officers, and painted them bright pictures of the Constantinople they hoped so soon to occupy for the great White Czar; and when they at last unwillingly left him with Kosakoff, they declared he should be their brother, that he ought to be a Russian, and that when they looted the palaces of the Bosphorus they would share with him the treasuries of the Sultan who had refused his services.

But Beaconsfield had something to say to that,

and Constantinople is still a promised land to the Cossack from the Don, and those grey-bearded Tcherkesse will never in person spoil that ancient city, but must be content to leave it as a doubtful legacy to their sons; for the Russians were checked in their onward progress, and remained at Adrianople, cursing fate and the English. Some few, however, of the officers, and among these Kosakoff, obtained permission to go as visitors to the place they had hoped to enter as conquerors, and with them, of course, went Strudelwitz. He soon found out that when Kosakoff had said that he had plenty of money he spoke no more than the truth, for his income was at least 100,000 roubles, or £10,000 a year, which he spent like water.

Those who know Constantinople, with its strange mingling of filth and magnificence, of Oriental and Occidental splendour and vice, can easily imagine the life that Kosakoff, newly released from the hardships of campaigning and the trammels of discipline, and Strudelwitz, formerly almost without a penny, but now with a companion who was, as it were, a living bank to draw upon, led in that city, where the latter acted as cicerone. The Turk is ever open to bribery, and the Turkish policeman is no better than the minister who controls his destinies or extorts

burdensome taxes from a groaning province, so Kosakoff's ready purse was continually in his hand in order to get himself or his friend, or most frequently both, out of the venal clutches of the keepers of the peace. For the first time since Strudelwitz arose to find his goodly patrimony squandered he had an almost unlimited command of money, and he made such wild use of the welcome opportunity that the two companions were twice requested to leave hotels which they had honoured only to make themselves public nuisances. One erratic notion, born of his fertile brain, was to gather some dozen organ-grinders in front of their last hotel, with strict orders to play each a different tune, while the two barons sat at their ease in the balcony, which the other guests vacated for their sole use.

Had Kosakoff remained much longer in Constantinople, perhaps these two well-suited companions might have got into trouble from which no amount of money would have freed them; but fortunately, at least for Strudelwitz, who had tired out the German embassy during his first stay in the city, the Russian was ordered to rejoin his regiment, which with the rest of the army was bound for the north of the Danube. Before going he gave Strudelwitz a thousand roubles, saying: "Now, my dear friend, it

is best for you to go back to Germany; for without my purse I foresee that you will get into some serious difficulty."

They embraced, kissed each other, and parted, Strudelwitz vowing that he would return home at once—which, probably, for the moment he meant to do.

But he had a thousand roubles, and where is the Bohemian of any standing who does not believe that £100 is a sum practically inexhaustible? The baron could not make up his mind to desert the pleasant banks of the Bosphorus, and accordingly he stayed on and on until the greater portion of his funds was spent, and destitution stared him once more in the face. Yet luck did not desert him, and a certain pacha of high standing, who, by his influence, had obtained a concession to erect kiosques in the city for the sale of water, made Strudelwitz his partner, on condition that the German could induce some European banker or capitalist to invest his money in the speculation. This was undoubtedly a very promising undertaking, and Strudelwitz felt himself a rich man once more as he chuckled over the impending ruin of the stout water-carriers who had plied their trade from before the time of the Arabian Nights and the Great Khalif Haroun Alraschid.

With some cash obtained from the friendly pacha, who believed in him too well, he set out for London to visit a great banking firm which he was convinced would be most eager to enter into such projects. He blessed the stars which had directed his course to Turkey.

It was not in Strudelwitz's nature, however important the business he might have to transact, to visit London, and to refrain from "doing" the greatest city in the world. His "doing it" included, among other adventures, his being fined for disorderly conduct at one of the metropolitan police courts, which so disgusted him that he hurried at once to Messrs. —— Bros., produced his credentials, and demanded financial support for his new undertaking. He was a man of business, for undoubtedly he possessed, and still possesses, the art of producing a favourable impression, and of skilfully puffing a project, which goes for so much in matters of trade or finance at a first introduction. The bankers received him courteously and considered his proposals. But their decision was against him. Turkey's finances were in a desperate condition; the government was almost disorganised, the provinces in confusion, and trade bad in Constantinople itself. To Strudelwitz's disgust, they explained their objections, and, in spite

of his arguments, were obdurate in refusing substantial aid. He left in the evening for Paris, for the English were decidedly too cautious, and he despised those who were unwilling to take some risk when the profits, as he considered, would be so immense.

Although he was almost at the end of his thousand roubles and the pacha's subsidy when he arrived in Paris, he put up at the most expensive hotel he could think of—for a financier should make a show, and the morrow would doubtless see him in command of unlimited credit. But to his infinite surprise he found that the French bankers might have been in correspondence with their English *confrères*, to such a degree were their objections identical, and before three days he saw that the Sultan's firman was mere waste paper, or at best a curiosity for collectors. On the evening of the day on which this unwelcome conclusion was forced upon him he sat in a café on the Boulevard des Italiens drinking absinthe, feeling in his pocket to make sure that he had sufficient money to pay for what he was drinking, and dismally brooding over his hotel bill, which he had no earthly means of discharging; for these water kiosques were castles in the air. He knew that it was idle to apply to his relations, for he had drained them dry, and they had—none too politely—intimated as much.

As for his military friends, they were for the most part nearly as poor as himself. He thought of the pacha; then of Kosakoff. That was a happy thought; he sprang to his feet, paid for his absinthe, and walking to his hotel, sent a strongly-worded appeal to his late comrade to allow him to pay him a visit. And—it would be as well to send some money to do it with, for he was stranded in Paris, as he had been in the Armenian's inn north of Adrianople.

As Mr. Micawber believed he had done all that could be expected of him, even by the most exigent, when he handed his creditors an I O U, Strudelwitz now considered he had done his duty, and was entitled to enjoy himself; for the onus now lay on Kosakoff.

He accordingly pawned his jewellery, and tasted the gayer life of Paris with an *abandon* which a man of assured future might have envied. It never occurred to him that the Russian might take no notice of the letter, or perhaps he knew the baron too well to misjudge him, for on the tenth day he received the expected letter, enclosing a draft for another thousand roubles, and begging him to make the castle his home for the winter, at least.

Kosakoff's chief estate was situated some two hundred miles from Riga, and consisted of vast tracts

of pasture, moorland, and forest; and there he was practically God and Czar to his people. The condition of the Russian peasantry is but inadequately known to the English people, in spite of Tolstoi, Tourguéneff and Dostoieffsky; but it is low indeed—at least, in actual recognition of right. In the country districts the Russians may be divided into peasants and nobles, and to the latter the former belong body and soul. The nobles pay no taxes, and have all the power to destroy or insult possessed by the *ancienne noblesse* of France before the Great Revolution; and in spite of the emancipation of the serf, the peasants lie beneath the iron heel of their lords, and are thankful if they are not kicked as well as trodden on. As for the Jews, they are beneath all law; and Kosakoff's uncle having once thrown a Hebrew into a dungeon for some offence, asked his *jäger*, a week afterwards, what had become of him. "Oh," replied the fellow coolly, "he made so much noise that I shot him!" And this did not happen very long ago.

Kosakoff himself was a strange individual, and not entirely the reckless, fine-tempered fellow he had shown himself to Strudelwitz. Even during his minority he had run a course of tremendous and headstrong debauchery, and when he came into full

possession of his estates the irresponsible power he wielded had not chastened him with a sense of duty, but had made him hard and cruel. He had fought under Skobeleff against the Tekke-Turcomans, and had been present at the storming of Geok Tepe. There he had taken part in the indiscriminate slaughter of men, women, and children, which forms so great a blot on the reputation of this general, when the Turcoman stronghold fell to the assault of the Russian forces. The deeds he had seen and taken part in weighed on him like a dark cloud, and made him by turns dully morose or actively cruel, while at times he rode all night through miles of his own forests, returning by day to a deep slumber of exhaustion. His companions were great drinkers, noble like himself, for he admitted none within his doors on terms of equality but those who were titled, who were great riders or hunters, or those who ministered to his moods. To women he was usually brutal, and the very slaves of his fancy trembled before him, glad of dismissal; and yet, in spite of this, he was in many things kind and generous to a degree. He would give anything to a man he loved, and would go far to serve him; he was faithful to old friendship, and appreciative of kind offices. Often he was kind and indulgent to his peasants, and yet, with the ominous

feeling which many of the powerful Russians experience, he said one day to an old friend and guest, Count Tepper-Laski, as both stood under the great portico :—

"This, my friend, is where I shall be hanged when these peasant dogs rebel. See if it is not so!"

His words may yet come true, though things move so very slowly in that land of ancient authority.

Such was the character of Strudelwitz's host, and of the place to which he was coming. His friend Tepper-Laski was a man of less formidable points, but equally noticeable in his own way, who had been staying with Kosakoff for a long time, and was, as it were, Master of the Horse in an establishment where fifty animals stood night and day in the stables.

On the 1st of November, 187—, Strudelwitz arrived at Walmasoff from Riga, having come by sea a great part of the way, and he made his *début* in a manner that reflected no discredit on the vast establishment at which he was to stay in the character of Kosakoff's friend, for he came with six post-horses, and was dressed in the height of fashion. Tepper-Laski was behind the scenes, and knew the real position of affairs; in fact, Kosakoff had asked his advice when the piteous letter of appeal came from Paris, but of this Strudelwitz was ignorant, and he carried himself

with an independent and aristocratic magnificence of manner that almost made the admiring count doubt the evidence of his own senses.

His arrival inaugurated a series of extraordinary carouses, carried on at Walmasoff, at another of Kosakoff's houses in the neighbourhood, or, for the sake of a thorough change, at Riga. There, upon one occasion, Strudelwitz, in a state of intoxication, seduced two bull-dogs, of terrible appearance, belonging to a travelling Englishman, from their allegiance, and took them to bed with him at his hotel. In the morning the dogs perceived so great a difference between Philip drunk and Philip sober that they refused, with one accord, to let him rise or touch his own clothes, while the hotel attendants dared not open the door. Strudelwitz was unable to account for their presence, and it was only when a waiter had the presence of mind to seek their master, who was in despair over the disappearance of his ferocious pets, that the dogs could be induced to quit the room peaceably, and raise the state of siege.

The prolonged series of debauches only came to an end, for the present at least, when Kosakoff deemed it time to commence preparations for a great elk-hunt, to which a score of Russian notabilities had been invited. Among these was a great prince of

the reigning house of Romanoff, who now holds almost despotic power; General L——, from Odessa, and many others well known in the highest European society.

The elk-hunt was a success; the prince was pleased, the other visitors delighted; and Strudelwitz, unabashed by royalty, was the great buffoon, jester, and master of the ceremonies, who made talk flow easily, who passed the bottle with dexterous rapidity, and kept everyone laughing till daylight broke into the great saloon which was the scene of orgies, now almost peculiarly Russian, but which a century ago were prevalent both in our own country and over the whole of the continent. But Strudelwitz at last made a mistake. One night, when General L——, who was not a great drinker, had retired to bed somewhat earlier than the German baron esteemed proper, he was roused at three o'clock in the morning by an assault on the door, which eventually yielded to a vigorous kick, and allowed Strudelwitz to enter the room, bearing a bottle of champagne, which he insisted the white-haired general should consume on the spot. It was only by the influence of Tepper-Laski and the physical suasion of three Tartar servants, whom he threatened to massacre, that he was induced to retire, and in the morning the indignant general

complained to his host. Kosakoff was furious, and sent for Tepper-Laski.

" This conduct of Strudelwitz cannot be pardoned," said he. " I wish you to order a carriage to take him at once to Riga. Where is he now ? "

" Asleep," said Tepper-Laski.

" Then please have his things packed up and put in the carriage, and when he has had coffee, say I request him to leave here instantly. And give him this ! "

" This " was a cheque for five hundred roubles. Kosakoff could not act meanly, but he was determined and as black as thunder.

When Strudelwitz woke he found coffee and brandy waiting for him, and Tepper-Laski seated in a chair in his room. The situation was not without a touch of comedy, and Tepper-Laski, who was not too serious, could not resist making it more comic than strict friendship might have required.

" Come, make haste, Strudelwitz," said he ; " we are going a long drive ! "

" You can go without me," grumbled the German. " I don't care about it this morning."

Tepper-Laski laughed.

" I think not, my friend. Kosakoff desires it particularly, and it won't do to cross him under the

circumstances"—by this time Strudelwitz knew that the other was quite familiar with his previous history —"so you must get up."

When Strudelwitz left his room three servants entered it immediately, packed up all his belongings, and by the time the others were at the door—for Tepper-Laski had delayed purposely—his luggage was in the carriage.

When the German saw that there was only one vehicle waiting, he stopped, but Tepper-Laski pushed him in. "Where are we going?" he asked.

"I am not going anywhere," answered his cruel friend; "but you are."

"Where to? Why, confound it! these are my things," said the baron, with a tremendous oath.

"To Riga, my friend," said Tepper-Laski, answering his question; "and Kosakoff presents his compliments, wishes you a pleasant journey, and gives you this (presenting the cheque) for your travelling expenses."

Strudelwitz fell back aghast.

"But why is this?" he shouted.

"You had better inquire of General L——," replied the count. "But now I must say good-bye. I, too, wish you a pleasant trip. Coachman, drive on!"

And as the whipped horses made a sudden plunge

and bore Strudelwitz off, Tepper-Laski sat down in the snow, and laughed until the tears ran down his face.

Two days later the visit of the great man and his satellites came to an end, and Kosakoff accompanied his guest in almost royal state, with a numerous retinue of servants, as far as Riga. When they had departed, he went, overcome by compliments and champagne, to his usual hotel, and there, in the public room, he found Strudelwitz sitting in sombre state, with a bottle of brandy before him. They bowed to each other solemnly, and there was a period of silence, broken at last by Kosakoff, who was ready to make friends even with the foul fiend himself, so good-tempered was he at the success of the late hunt and festivities. Strudelwitz reproached him in maudlin accents, and wept so many tears that the Russian's heart was quite touched. He ordered more brandy, and commenced drinking heavily, while Strudelwitz, who was never imprudent save when in flourishing circumstances, kept command over himself, and even grew more sober. When the one-sided drinking bout had proceeded for some time, and Kosakoff was reduced to a fit state of self-reproach and repentance, the German opened fire on him. He dilated upon his insulted honour, and shed tears to think that this had

proceeded from a friend ; he eloquently described his state of mind at being so summarily expelled for a single indiscretion from the party which he had done so much to make a merry one ; he expatiated on the cruelty of the rich and powerful friend who had done this evil thing, and he lamented, in moving accents and many-syllabled adjectives, his own miserable condition of dependence and poverty. Surely, he said, some reparation was due to him, some help should be extended to the last representative of a noble and unfortunate family. Poor Kosakoff burst into tears ; he implored pardon for his high-handed conduct, and vowed to help his friend, even with his blood.

"And if you do help me, Kosakoff," said Strudelwitz, "you must help me well this time."

"How much shall I give you, my dear friend?" wept Kosakoff, pulling out his cheque-book.

This was a question not so easy to be settled. He had never received more than a thousand roubles at one time, and now he would have asked for ten thousand if he had not feared to sober the generous Russian by the extravagance of his demands. Finally, he nobly undertook to relieve Kosakoff's exchequer of no more than a paltry five thousand, but when his friend gave him a cheque for that amount without

the slightest demur, he was overcome with remorse at his moderation. But they embraced each other fraternally, and in the morning Strudelwitz was on his way to St. Petersburg with a new notion in his fertile brain.

He had made many boon companions at Walmasoff, and had been universally liked, except at the last by General L——. The prince had approved of him as a noble jester, and all the great man's followers had confirmed the verdict; for his presence at a gathering was enough to ensure its success. But it says something for the peculiar character of this strange and unprincipled German that he always impressed everybody as a possibly strong and acute man, in spite of his folly, for, with all his love of riot, he continually showed an active and penetrating intellect. If it had not been so, he would scarcely have been able to go as far as he did in the city on the Neva. At Walmasoff, appearing as a man with money, as Kosakoff's friend, at a time when all were bent on enjoying themselves, his success in that society was not surprising; but it was certainly no fool who could re-introduce himself to those same people in St. Petersburg, and as a candidate for a salaried position interest them in obtaining him an appointment. But this he did, and he even recon-

ciled himself to General L——. He was to have a place in the secret police, where the courage, keenness, and unscrupulousness which he undoubtedly possessed might go far in making him a person of consequence. Strudelwitz was overjoyed to think how he had fallen on his feet, and went out to drink in order to reward his uncommon abstinence during the days he had devoted to business pure and simple. And when he was more than sufficiently exhilarated he hired a sleigh, and went for a drive on the Neffski Prospect.

What shall a man do who is a nobleman, a high and mighty baron, a companion of dukes and princes, and a member (*in posse*) of a terrible and secret order, when his driver does not handle the ribbons to suit his peculiar fancy? Of course the only thing to do is to beat the unfortunate man, to show him that he is a *moujik*, a plebeian, a slave, and a fool, ignorant of the rudiments of his art. This was what Strudelwitz did, and he thrashed the man without mitigation or remorse until his cries caused a crowd to collect, and made the late Czar, who was driving by, stop his sledge to inquire what was the reason of the tumult. Strudelwitz was arrested, kept twenty-four hours in prison, released by the influence of Kosakoff's friends, and recommended to leave St. Petersburg. His

Alnaschar visions were dissipated, and in disgust he set off for Warsaw.

After engaging in a disreputable negotiation in the ancient capital of disparted Poland, which fell through, he returned at last to Germany, and paid his relatives—who were by no means anxious to receive him—a visit, which threatened to have no end. For some time there is a lacuna in the history of his life as it has been related to me, but I have learnt that he was at last induced to be condescending enough to accept a subordinate position in a great commercial business, the head-quarters of which were in Berlin. Whether he had really tired of the great uncertainties of his past career, and had made a strong resolution to succeed in life or not, he has not revealed, but it is a fact that for years he behaved to all outward appearance in as sedate and orderly a manner as any spectacled German clerk in a London warehouse, and showed so much business aptitude and energy that he was finally promoted to be the chief of a branch in Dresden.

While he occupied this position he was called on by Count Tepper-Laski, who had been in South America for some years. He found Strudelwitz in a large office, with perfect appointments and every comfort, while a number of clerks, whom he called his

"slaves," trembled at his nod. To demonstrate his power and position to the count, he called in an elderly clerk, bullied him in an autocratic manner for an imaginary mistake, and threatened to dismiss him if it occurred again.

"You see, my dear friend," said he, "that if Kosakoff has his *moujiks*, I have mine, and if I can't flog them with a *najaika*, I can with my tongue."

But success was always too much for him, and his time in this responsible position grew short. If there were any disturbance in a café restaurant, it might certainly be put down to Baron Strudelwitz; he was a bugbear to the police; he was compelled to leave hotel after hotel; and having finally been fined for an assault, he was requested to resign, and left Dresden with neither money nor reputation.

"I met him afterwards," said Tepper-Laski, "in Berlin. I was directed to a poor-looking house in a poorer street. But I found him as happy as ever, with some brandy and a young person whom he introduced as the Baroness. I have my doubts about that, for there was a notice below that Fräulein Schmidt made dresses and millinery. But he cursed business as a low pursuit, and I left him singing a drinking song."

Some time afterwards I was sitting in the count's chambers in London, and he showed me a post-card which had arrived that morning from Copenhagen. He translated it to me—

"DEAR FRIEND,

"I am enjoying myself enormously. I spent two months in Stockholm most delightfully, and now I am in the best hotel, with the finest brandy and cigars before me, looking out on a pleasant view such as I love. I hope you are happy too. Perhaps I may visit you in London.—Yours, "STRUDELWITZ."

This is the last I have heard of the baron. It seems as if his motto should be *Quocunque jeceris stabit,* for he always falls upon his legs.

THE TROUBLES OF JOHANN ECKERT.

THE TROUBLES OF JOHANN ECKERT.

THE two brothers, Rudolf and Johann Eckert, sat together under the verandah, just out of reach of the hot South African sun which shone high overhead in the cloudless sky on the roofs and dusty roads of Bloemfontein. The air was quite still, most of the townsfolk were quiet: it was far too hot to work, too hot for any living things but flies to pretend to exertion. Certainly the flies were active. They buzzed round the two men ceaselessly, making dashes every now and again at the barrier of smoke which circled upwards from their pipes. Sometimes they evaded it between the puffs, and had to be brushed away. Sometimes they retreated baffled. On the shadier side of the road—for there was a little shade on the north, since the sun cannot be quite vertical in those latitudes—a yellow dusty dog slunk by, looking for a cool spot; the cocks and hens avoided the light, and showed how they felt the heat by opening their beaks when they stood still. It was high summer in South

Africa. Just in that neighbourhood the only living creatures who made any noise were Rudolf's three children and their English mother, who chided them alternately in bad German and her native tongue. Neither of them nor of the flies did the men take note. They were considering something: that was certain—or rather, Rudolf, the elder, abler, and more knowing in African matters, was considering, while Johann, who was smaller, and a meek but sturdy blue-eyed man, only lately from the Fatherland, sat ready to think exactly what his big brother thought. He always had done so, and always would. So the flies buzzed, the fowls panted, and the dog made every now and again a little cloud of dust as he pawed the flies off his nose, while the tobacco-smoke which so aids slow consideration, circled airily upwards. Presently the elder brother spoke.

"It is a pity, Johann, that things went not well in the Fatherland. The little farm where we were born sold! Ah! someone else tends the vines now."

For their home had been in Southern Germany, where people drink wine rather than beer. Johann looked up with a sorrowful smile.

"Yes, Wilhelm Francke; and he said to me: 'But you, Hans, are going to Africa, and you will find your brother as rich as a burgomaster.'"

Rudolf stroked his beard, and his answering smile was a little grim with years of wasted work and vain hope. How many years he had been in that new country! Yet he was scarcely wealthier than when he first set foot in it—save, indeed, for his children and the wife he loved.

"A poor burgomaster, I think, my brother!" he said, after a pause, during which he puffed his long pipe somewhat quicker. "But let us not mind that. I was thinking of little Gretchen."

Not his own little Gretchen, but of Johann's sweetheart, whom he had left with promises to send for her as soon as he was able. How often are those promises made, and made in vain. Rudolf repeated "little Gretchen" tenderly, for he remembered her as a seven-year old maiden laughing among the thick-leaved vines.

"Yes, of Gretchen," repeated his brother sadly, for he began to see that it might be years until they met once more. After that they did not speak for some time: so long, indeed, that the yellow dog was obliged to get up and lie down again quite close to the opposite house. For when the sun fell on him the flies became very troublesome.

"This will not do," said Rudolf at last. "We must make more money, Johann. Ten years have I

worked, and I have made so little. And you—what must you do? I must think."

He filled his pipe again, and sat puffing at it, while he clutched his fair beard with a great brown hand. Johann said nothing, but looked at his elder brother trustfully. He had always believed in him. And presently Rudolf filled his pipe once more.

"Have you thought, my brother?" asked the younger almost timidly; for the process of such deep grave consideration was not lightly to be disturbed.

"I am thinking, Johann;" and then there was a long space of silence, at first only disturbed by the wavering monotone of buzzing flies. But far up the north-west road was a light cloud of dust. Out of it came presently the long white horns of the leaders of an ox team. As it drew nearer the creaking of the waggon was heard, and the crack of the heavy whip. Rudolf stared at it steadily, and as the driver passed him with a nod, he returned it, and looked far away down the road whence the team had come. Yet it was but a waggon loaded with firewood. Now no more smoke issued from his pipe. It held only ashes.

"Have you then thought, my brother?" asked Johann once more.

"Yes, Johann, I have thought," replied Rudolf

as he knocked the ashes out of his pipe. Without more words, he rose up and went slowly into the house, leaving Johann wondering very much what it was he had determined to do; for if Rudolf had thought, it most surely meant something.

Late in the evening, when the sun had gone down and the air was a little cooler, the two brothers and the wife of the elder sat together near their open door. Emily was mending the torn jacket of young Rudolf, their eldest boy, and said but little. Nor did Johann. But suddenly the head of the household spoke, just as if he were continuing what he had begun in the heat of the noon-time under the verandah.

"Yes, Johann, I have thought; and you, and you Emily, listen. These years we have not done well. We are still poor. Perhaps I have not been brave enough to become rich. For what do men do when they are poor, but can still get enough to have a good team of salted oxen which do not fear the sickness? They go trading beyond the desert."

He paused, and Emily, who was looking steadfastly at him, dropped the unfinished coat.

"Yes, beyond the desert. They leave their homes, and go away for——"

"Yes, Rudolf?" said she anxiously.

"For two years or more, and then when they come back——"

"When they come back?" repeated Emily, in a low voice.

"They have their waggon filled with ivory and feathers, and perhaps some gold, and are rich ever afterwards. They can buy a farm and travel no more. Yes, Johann, I have thought. Yes."

After he had finished no one spoke. He avoided their eyes, and with a nervous motion filled his pipe. His hand shook as he lighted it, and he pulled his chair a little nearer to the door, staring out into the gathering darkness. Johann looked at him admiringly, for he wondered at his great gift of speech and strength of mind; but he could say nothing—nothing at all. He saw tears gather in Emily's eyes and roll down her cheeks heavily. She brushed them away, and going softly behind her husband, kissed his cheek. As she left the room he said once more in a low voice: "Yes." But he ceased smoking.

"My brother," said Johann, "I think Emily is weeping."

Rudolf did not answer for a long minute.

"Yes, Johann—but I am a man, and I have thought."

Presently he put his pipe away, and said, "Good-

night" to his brother, who sat for a long time on the edge of the floor of the verandah, with his feet in the hot dusty sand, looking at the stars which shone so purely in the bright southern air. When should he see those which were familiar to him, and which looked down, not upon the barren uplands of the African plateaus, but on the leafy hills that hold the Rhine? He must write again to Gretchen, to tell her how long it might be. And in the morning he wrote.

By the time the little German girl received his letter Johann and Rudolf had started on their journey with a big waggon and twenty oxen. All that the two brothers had in the world went to buy the waggon and team—indeed, a little more than they had, for Rudolf got credit from a countryman of his for much of the goods which they would trade for feathers and ivory. But all people trusted Rudolf. Johann was not alone in thinking that something would be done when the big steadfast man made up his mind to do it. All inexperienced as he was, Johann had no fear and misgiving with Rudolf. By himself he might doubt, just as Emily did when she saw them depart, but with him he was strong and quick, and ready; believing in his brother, who was a faith and creed to him, he trusted himself. Without

him he might be as old Frau Eckert had been when the father died, irresolute and fearful. That was why the vineyard had been sold: that was why Johann came to Africa. Yet during her husband's life the mother had been reckoned clever and strong; yet after all it was with a strength she drew from her husband. And Rudolf and his father were as like as two oxen at night-time. If Johann had no one to trust, it might go as hard with him as it did with Emily, who wept so when the slow inexorable oxen drew the very heart out of her going towards the sunset. For two years! Poor little Englishwoman!

For two years. And for two years the sun rose and set in the natural order of the universe; and the rain fell upon the just and the unjust—on Hottentots and Englishmen and Dutchmen; the grass grew and was parched up, and some became rich and others poor. That Emily was pinched because the years were long was compensated for in the universal average by Rudolf's waggon filling itself with ivory, and feathers, and skins. For assuredly, as far as the attainment of wealth was concerned, the brothers had been lucky. When their team pulled straight for the rising sun, and they looked towards home, their sixteen remaining oxen had almost enough to do to

draw the load over sandy places. Yet they were strong enough, and so was Johann. But Rudolf? No, he was not so strong—and this is how it came about.

One day, when they had been from home a little more than a year, Rudolf shot a gemsbok, and Johann, being the nearest, rushed to it joyfully, without taking care to see that it was really dead. When he came close the dying animal rose, and attacked him furiously. Johann grasped its horns, and thrice saved himself from a thrust, when Rudolf ran up breathlessly to help him. In a few moments the buck lay dead, but as the elder brother wiped his knife on its warm skin he pressed his hand hard against his own side; for the horn of the gemsbok had pierced him there. Although not a mortal wound, it was very serious, and for more than a month Rudolf could scarcely move. Six months later he had a kind of malarial fever, and the old wound broke out afresh. They were camped by the kraals of some friendly Hottentots, and sometimes it was possible to get a little milk. Yet with all Johann's care it took Rudolf long to recover even a little of his old strength. He would never be what he had been: never. But this Johann would not believe. It could not be that Rudolf, to whom he looked for strength and help in

every trial, was really—really what? Dying? No, that could not be. For what would happen if—— But Johann began to sing resolutely, and went no further than that "if." It bounded a desolate country, and was itself a desert.

Some nights after finally heading for home, Rudolf, who never complained, said to his brother—

"We have been a long time from home, Johann."

"Yes," answered Johann dreamily, "three years." For he was thinking of Gretchen and his German home.

"No, not three; two," corrected the elder man. "But it is long, very long. I think——"

"Yes, Rudolf?" said Johann, looking up quickly.

"Nay, nothing."

"What do you mean, Rudolf?"

"Nothing, nothing," said the elder brother. And then he wearily rolled himself up in his blankets; but not to sleep. In the middle of the night Johann woke, hearing a voice. For a moment he thought the fever had returned. But Rudolf was praying to the God above the unmoved stars to be allowed to see his wife once more, and the agony of his loving spirit was such that he at last spoke. Johann bowed his head, and knelt by the dying fire. The heavy tears ran down his cheeks, and fell hissing on the hot

embers. But the skies overhead were lucid and calm; a warm wind felt its way across the dark plain, and flapped the cover of the great waggon, whose contents had cost so much; the earth and sky of midnight were beautiful, but soulless and devoid of pity.

After this night Rudolf grew weaker and weaker. Often he suffered great pain, and at last was obliged to ride in the waggon. Johann did all the work; he inspanned the oxen and drove them, he brought the water, and did the cooking. Sometimes, after Rudolf had reluctantly yielded the whip to him, he seemed to think that the pace of the team was very slow. Occasionally he even complained that Johann did not drive fast enough. The younger man knew well enough that the poor patient oxen were doing their best; and, trying to deceive himself, he asked, under his breath, why it was that Rudolf was so impatient. Of course, he said, it was only that the time seemed longer, through his being idle for a few days until he got well. Of course, hurry could make no difference. Yes, that was it. Then suddenly the landscape blurred, and the hot veldt danced before him, so that he went back and cried—

"How goes it, my brother?"

But sometimes Rudolf did not answer. He was

staring at the far horizon, and his eager spirit ran before the way. So sometimes Johann did not ask that question when he could not see the distant hills, nor even the slow oxen bending quietly to their heavy yokes.

For he saw—though he would not own to himself that he saw—what was to be. When he was well Rudolf bore with the hardest, roughest fare, but now he complained in a fretful way, painful to see in a strong man. Johann, who was a miserable rifle shot, never managed to kill a springbok, though there might be hundreds in the herd. He blamed himself for it very much, and grew to look upon his failure in marksmanship as a moral fault. His very anxiety to procure fresh meat unsteadied his nerves, so that at last he came to the conclusion that he could never hit anything; and perhaps he was right, for some men can never learn to use a rifle. But it hurt him to see Rudolf's face grow pallid and bloodless under the tan, while great dark circles came round his blue eyes, looking wistfully, and at last hopefully, towards the populous and settled south and east. His hands began to get thin, too, and now he rarely spoke, even when Johann helped him slowly from the high waggon at night-time. Once he had spoken incessantly of Emily and his children, but now he

never let their names pass his lips. Perhaps he felt he would have broken down if he had done so: that is what Johann thought.

One day, when he looked so worn and ill as to make his brother afraid, the younger spoke.

"Do you not think, Rudolf, that it would be as well if we stayed here for a while until you get better? Travelling is not good for you. You are in pain." And Rudolf answered, with a curious, quick impatience, "Nay, let us get on. We are slow, slow, very slow."

It was early morning then, and the level easterly sun stared at them across the yellow plain, dotted black with the scattered oxen. When they had finished breakfast, Johann drove up the team, and then Rudolf spoke again.

"Yes, let us get on. I will help you inspan."

As he said this he rose, but fell down instantly in a dead faint. Johann ran to him, lifted up his head, and then laid it down again in order to get some water. When the sick man at last came to himself, and opened his eyes beneath the pale scared face of his brother, he looked up sadly.

"I think, Johann, that I shall never see home again; and yet—let us get on."

Johann for the first time broke down, but through

his tears tried to comfort Rudolf, even though he saw his brother spoke the truth.

That night they camped in a desert-like place by a water-hole which was almost dry. There was little or no grass, and the brush was hard and scanty. Close to them a small band of miserable wandering Hottentots made their fire. Coming to the waggon, they begged for food.

"Give them a little," said Rudolf. "Poor devils! they look wretched enough; and we should be charitable even to these. Yet sometimes it is not good to give to them."

He did not explain why. Talking tired him so. But Johann gave them some flour, and set to work making his own supper. All that Rudolf took was a little tea.

Three days after this they stayed a whole day at a water-hole, with plenty of grass about it. Johann said cheerfully that it was necessary for the oxen, and now Rudolf did not fight against the delay. At night time, after Johann lay down, the sick man spoke to him.

"Yes, Johann, I have been thinking, and I want to say something." He paused for a minute or two, and then resumed.

"We are now not so far from the frontier. The

way you know, for we travelled here before. There is no need to speak about that. But remember to be careful. All this in our waggon is yours, and Emily's, and the children's. It must come to them safely. For they must now be poor, seeing it is so long since we left home. So I charge you with it, Johann. That is all."

And Johann, listening dry-eyed and speechless, did not ask why Rudolf spoke in this way. Yet that night he lay very close to him, and slept so lightly that he woke when Rudolf called "Emily."

"What is it, brother?" he asked.

"Nothing, Johann," answered the other—"nothing but a dream." He spoke so strongly that his voice comforted Johann, who, being very tired, went to sleep again.

When he rose early in the morning he moved very quietly, for Rudolf was resting in such peace. The dawn low down on the long dark horizon showed a ribbon of rose and a line of pure faint green. As the rose grew he began to distinguish the oxen from the bushes in the light that poured across the plain like loosed waters. The air was mild and warm, and tasted faintly aromatic, as though it had rested through the long night on a bed of odorous herbs. And though the wider redder rose of the eastern sky

began to be shot through with yellower rays from the sun, which would in a moment break from the underworld, he still let his brother lie.

"It is so good for him," he murmured, as he made breakfast silently. The first flames of his early-lighted fire had flickered redly. Now in the risen day they began to gnaw blackly at the heaped sticks. He looked again at Rudolf, who was very still, and had not moved. Suddenly the warm north wind, languid and sweet, seemed to grow cold and malignant; the dawn, which was rose and fire and gold mingled gloriously in the east, seemed as colourless as pale and shallow water. And running with footsteps which were no longer light, he called loudly to his brother. But Rudolf had suffered very much, and sleep was "so good for him."

That morning, as on every morning that brought another day of waiting, Emily said to little Rudolf, a sturdy grave child of four—

"Go and see if father is coming."

He went out obediently, and stared down the dusty road. When he came back he shook his fair little head.

"Then you must look again by-and-bye," said his mother cheerfully. For the time was certainly grow-

ing short now—now when Johann, blinded with tears, was digging Rudolf's grave in the deep sand of the distant desert.

He had striven hard to brace himself for the shock which he knew must come, and yet its suddenness almost overcame him. That Rudolf should really be dead seemed so incredible to Johann as he drove through the wilderness, that he often fancied him still sitting in the waggon, looking with painful longing towards home. Waking from that day-dream, it seemed doubly hard and cruel to think that he was leaving him behind, buried in the thin dry sand, which the next wind might sweep away for the vultures, even then sailing in the sky above. He almost wrung his hands in despair as the dead man called to him, no longer to give those orders which came so naturally from the firm will and steadfast heart, but to plead with a vain and pitiful appeal for the aid of one who had been no more than a willow wand in the strong hand which was now past all effort for ever. And so the burden fell from the strong upon the weak. Heavy indeed it proved to the little man who stumbled across the desert, half blinded with tears, fearing lest he should fail to keep the trust which Death had given him ; for, compared with Rudolf, he knew so little. Yet he would do his best.

It was the first time in his life that he had been really alone, and the solitude was awful and oppressive. He was afraid of the vast veldt, and tried to keep his eyes upon the oxen, calling them by their names to see them move their ears and bend more to the yoke, in order that he might be sure they heard and lived, and were not mere machines. At last he was glad to think that they had a certain community of interest with him, inasmuch as they, too, desired to reach home, and graze the grass of their native country. So he spoke to them encouragingly, as if they thoroughly understood what he said. At times, when the earth and sky and wind seemed more silent than ever in the hot high sun, he felt that strange fear which comes to some men in a great solitude, and speaking aloud suddenly to make sure that his tongue could yet fulfil its office, he started with a curious shock at the unnatural sound he made. It was a relief to him to hear one of the oxen make a noise, though it were but a kind of half strangled whistle in the throat, and he wished that he had a dog in order that it might bark, or come to him pleading with bright eyes for the food he ate in loneliness. Although he feared the natives, he even desired to see a stray Hottentot, and that was at last granted him by the curious and perverse fate which heaped troubles upon

one so little able to bear them. At the third camping-place from Rudolf's grave he found some thirty-five of these diminutive and degraded denizens of the desert—men, women, and children—camped by the pool of water.

These children of the veldt greeted him amicably, being, doubtless, glad enough to see him, although he did not know the reason. This, however, they very soon showed him, for one of them, a little fellow with bleary eyes that were full of evil cunning, came to his fire soon after he had outspanned, and acted as spokesman for the others in a difficult jargon of clicks, English, and Dutch.

"Baas," he urged, without preliminary, "we're very hungry. Give us something to eat."

"Well," thought Johann, "why not? Am I not glad to see anything which looks like a man: which can talk, if only to beg?"

So he doled them out some salt beef and flour. Not content with the salt in the beef, they came to ask for more salt, and Johann went to his stores to see if he could satisfy them. He found the bag nearly empty, but on turning over the box in which such things were kept, discovered another bag. On opening it, the contents seemed not unlike salt of some kind. He handled it doubtfully, being half

inclined to give them some, but on putting a crystal to his tongue, he found it tasted acrid and bitter. He looked for a label, and with a kind of shock found that it was arsenic for use in skin preserving, which his want of knowledge or Rudolf's carelessness had allowed to get in the provision box. Johann trembled to think of what he had so nearly done, and, turning to the waiting Hottentot, told him that he had no salt. The fellow went away grumbling.

In spite of the painful longing for human companionship which had so depressed him, he was not loth in the morning to look forward to leaving them. So when he found they followed in his track, he was not altogether pleased. And seeing that his stock of food was by no means large, he was uneasy at their repeating the request, which rapidly became a demand, for further supplies at noon. He shook his head; and then his fellow-travellers lifted up their guns and knobkerries, jabbering angrily, till the little spokesman came insinuatingly to the rescue.

"Baas," he began, "we are very hungry, and you have meat. Give us some; then we go away."

"Yes," replied Johann doubtfully; "but if I give it you, will you go away?"

Then, as he had no choice, and as they intimated with smiles that such was their fixed intention, he

went to his fast-diminishing stores again. But they did not go away, evidently having little regard for a promise which was not rendered sacred by the sanction of superior force in case they broke it. Yet they did remain so long at his old camp after he had driven off that he hoped he had seen the last of them. But his hope was vain. By night they were up with him again, and showed themselves more exigent in their demands than ever.

"Baas, you have plenty oxen. Give us one. We are very hungry."

Johann was in terrible perplexity, and greatly confused by the necessity of ready decision. Could he use force if his refusal was not accepted? With so many, would it not be utterly useless? and yet, to give them an ox, and perhaps afterwards another—ay, and yet more—would jeopardise his trust; it might mean the loss of the waggon and all its contents. He tried to put on a bold front, and refused what they asked, as if it were only a joke on their part to make such a demand. His answer was received sulkily at first, and then in wrath. One of the biggest of the men lifted up his assegai to stab an ox, but the little fellow who did the negotiations stopped him.

"Better give us an ox, Baas; then we go away."

He spoke so boldly and insolently that Johann felt bewildered and helpless before the hostile crowd.

"You said so before," he replied.

"This time we go, Baas," said the little beast of a man, with a kind of chuckle which belied his promise.

Yet Johann at last yielded, and gave up "Englishman" to them. "Englishman," in accordance with Boer custom, was the worst ox in the team; and yet how Johann regretted the poor animal when he saw him dying, brutally stabbed by a dozen spears. The whole night long the human beings, whom he now looked upon as enemies, gorged themselves with flesh, which they partly cooked in his big iron pot and partly roasted.

While their feast went on Johann could not sleep. He saw there was little likelihood of the Hottentots keeping their word, and if they renewed their attacks upon his team, it might lead to his own death and the certain loss of the precious feathers and ivory. But what could he do? Suppose he resolutely refused in any case to give up another ox, and even shot one of the robbers if they tried to take it without his permission? He shook his bewildered head in despair. He was but one man, and the chances were that he would be instantly speared or stabbed, together with the oxen.

If only some other white man or a party would come along! Yet he knew he was far out in a very sea of a plain. He could do nothing save act as circumstances required; perhaps he might not have to act. After temporising thus, he ate his own scanty supper. In hunting for the last little salt in the box, he came across the bag of arsenic again. He lifted it up slowly, but threw it down again, and ate what he could with no appetite. Poor Johann! how solitary and weak he felt with that great burden on his shoulders—a burden which he could not lay aside in sleep.

He rose long before dawn, and thus managed to get away very early. But an ox team travels slowly, very slowly. Even on a good road, one may not drive oxen day after day, with a full waggon, more than about twelve miles, and here road was none. So by the time the sun was setting behind him, those who were literally eating him up again came in sight. He drove on and on till long past sundown, and till the oxen grew very tired. He was still travelling when the villainous crew caught him up, and then the little Hottentot, who seemed as hungry as ever, kept hinting to him that the solitary ox, Englishman's mate, who was not yoked up, was of no service, and might well be spared. Johann turned a deaf ear to

his insinuations, and at last one of the others speared it without remark. Johann dropped his whip and ran to the waggon for his rifle. But he stopped short ere he reached it. For his own part, he was not afraid—no; and had the team and the property in the waggon been his alone, he would have used his weapon and taken the consequences. But he thought of what Rudolf had said—of Emily, of the children, and of Gretchen. In his desolation he thought so much of her. How hard it would be to die like a dog in the desert, when a woman like that loved him! Love may sometimes make men brave, but more often it makes them cowards. So Johann choked back his wrath, and did nothing: for, perhaps—perhaps these blood-suckers might be satisfied at last.

The next night they did not come up with him, and he prayed that he might have seen the last of them. A great thankfulness filled his heart, for their not coming had saved him—or them. But on the following night the blood of another of his oxen soaked into the soil, and Johann grew desperate.

Well he might, for already the toil was greater than it should be for the patient beasts bending to the yoke. He loved them, partly for their mild ways, and partly as the means which should make Gretchen

his wife, and it cut him to the heart to use the whip more than he had done. Of old, poor Englishman had a monopoly of it, but now at every very sandy place he was obliged to urge them bitterly; and when there was more reason for making short stages, these black devils made him drive long ones. So again he asked what should he do if they still persisted.

And persistent they were. As he loosed the oxen late that night, he saw them once more far off against the after-glow on a little ridge of the veldt. He had no heart to make a fire to cook supper. He got into the waggon and sat there, trying to think.

Did he dare load the rifles and try to shoot them? Alas! he had not the least confidence in his even hitting one, for Rudolf's merriment at his hunting failures, unbroken by a single success, was fresh in his memory. Oh, if he could only hear that laugh now! No, he dared not try that plan; the risk was too great—the risk to his sacred charge. Yet it was so hard to be near home—Rudolf's home—and never to reach it. The slow tears forced themselves from under his quivering eyelids. Presently he reached out with his hand, and doubtfully touched the bag which held what he had taken to be salt, but which he knew now was not salt. He put the bag down

almost reluctantly. Had not these beasts asked him for salt once before? Presently they would come up with him again, and he would hear that whine of "Baas, we are so hungry," come from the little black devil who knew some English. Or perhaps they would not ask this time, but go and kill for themselves.—Salt, salt!

Johann shook in a very fever and agony of fearful thought. Instead of slow tears to his eyes, great drops of perspiration came to his brows and dropped heavily. He clenched his hands, and bit his lip till the blood trickled blackly into his fair beard. Was it right? Was it not right? Were they not beasts—mere beasts? And Emily was waiting with her children; yes, and Gretchen was waiting too. He tried to put aside the temptation that assailed him; he tried to pray. But he could not, and fascinated with the possibilities that lay there, he plunged his hand down into the—salt, laving it in the crystals, which his convulsive grasp ground to powder.

What was he to do in his loneliness—he who had so little force of will, who so lacked the strong decision of the dead man yonder in the westerly desert? If Rudolf were only there! His very voice would frighten these human vultures away. Yet perhaps he could not now protect himself from a single

winged vulture who discerned his body, bared by the wind's winnowing fan of the scanty sand in which he had been buried. But he had said: "I charge you with it, Johann." And so everything depended on Johann—and the salt.

He came out of the waggon at last, and began to make a fire. Once or twice his thoughts wandered from his task, and even when he struck a match he let it burn out without using it. He remained in a crouching attitude for some minutes, until, on looking up, he found the Hottentots close to him, as they passed an old broken-down kraal which rose like a mound near the scanty pool of thickening water. A few mimosas stood there blackly in the gathering dusk; over them the moon was a thin faint crescent. The very last rose of the after-glow faded in the west, and eastward the oxen were seeking their food in silence. He looked at them longingly, with a feeling of despair that he could not protect them—that one more at the very least must be sacrificed. With a sudden gesture of anger he struck another match, for he heard the guttural chatter of the Hottentots closer and closer at hand. They came up to the great waggon, with its sunburnt cover, and for a moment or two watched the little flame leap and crawl, and leap again, until it grew strong. There is a strange fas-

cination in a fire, whether it be for the use of man or for his destruction, whether it burn wood or burn flesh, whether it be actual or metaphorical—flame in the dark air or fever in the angered blood. And as they all watched it, Johann's heart itself was on fire with a consuming rage—for they gave utterance at last to the old cry—

"Baas, we're so hungry."

He said nothing, and they repeated it again.

"What do you want, then? Flour?"

"Meat, meat, Baas!"

And the rest grunted and clicked acquiescence.

"You said you would go if I gave you that last ox," answered Johann, in a dry unnatural voice. "I can give you no more."

"Oh yes, Baas," cried the other, with a chuckle. "Just this time. To-morrow we will go; yes, to-morrow."

There was a moment's pause, and Johann, trying to speak, only uttered a kind of choked gurgle. He turned away, and then, turning round again, pointed to the oxen in silence. Let them do as they would; he would neither give nor refuse.

The gesture was enough for those who would have taken no refusal, and in a few minutes the fattest ox of the team lay dying near the pool, while the Hot-

tentots crowded round to watch his final gasps. Then, where was the pot? Without asking leave, they took it from beneath the waggon, where it hung on the hind-axle, while others lighted the fire. Then they sat round the blaze, waiting for their meal to be made ready. They chattered like apes—like imps—like devils! And Johann?

He walked up and down by his fire in an agony of spirit. His face was very white, and the blood still ran from the lip he had bitten through. It was easy to do; it was hard—it was easy; it was hard! so his mind wavered flamelike in the wind, shooting up strongly and again dying down. Once and once again he went to the waggon, and then turned back hurriedly. He put in his hand, and catching hold of the bag, took out a handful of the crystals. He crushed them and ground them in his grasp until they ran in powder through his fingers. He threw the stuff on the ground and turned away. But eastward, eastward he saw the woman he loved, and those whom Rudolf had loved, waiting for him. They were no longer light-hearted, but heavy-eyed and full of despair. The tears rushed to his own eyes; he fell on his knees; he tried to pray, and could not. Would not a sign be given him? And overhead the deep sky was calm. But yes; what

was that? who was it speaking to him? No one but the savage interpreter begging once more—

"Baas, can't you give us some salt?"

Some salt! Aye, to be sure Johann could give them that, for the blood rushed to his head violently, and his hands shook no more. He turned in the semi-darkness towards the fire by which they sat in gluttonous expectation—men, women, and children; and he saw men who were like the tzetze fly to cattle on the veldt: women who were as vile as their savage masters: and children—well, cubs become lions, or rather eggs become scorpions and centipedes. He nodded to the Hottentot and waved him off. He turned to his waggon—for the last time.

Striding to their fire, he brushed his way through the dirty malodorous crowd, which yielded at his approach. "So you want salt, eh?" he asked, and was answered with "Yes" and "Ja," and with unintelligible clicks. He drew his hands out of his pockets and dropped two handfuls of shining crystals into the pot, which began to simmer. They thanked him, wondering perhaps at his meekness and his folly. And then going back to the waggon, he took his rifle and went off into the plain, to be far away from such a feast.

He went a very long way—much farther than

any of the oxen had yet wandered—and kept on turning to look back as he fled. For he saw the little red fire gleaming behind him, as another might have done in ancient story if he had turned again to look upon the smitten Cities of the Plain. Sometimes as he stood the moving figures of men, women, and children blotted it out for a time, and then it blazed up again as strong as ever. Were they eating that mess now, or was it yet seething and bubbling in the pot? He turned and ran towards the place again, but on coming within a quarter of a mile, he stopped and fled once more. The sweat ran down him in streams; his own tongue was parched and burning; the skin of his lips cracked as though he were poisoned. Once he started violently, as if only suddenly aware of the enormity of his deed. He would go back and warn them not to eat, saying that he had made a mistake, and that there was something wrong with the salt. Yes, he would do it. Turning to look for the fire, he could see it no longer.

He ran round like one demented, trying vainly to find some little hillock on which to raise himself to get a better view of the darkened plain. He went this way and that way, and in a circle, every now and again falling when every moment was precious. He

would be late, late, he muttered; and then at last he saw the little red twinkle of the distant flame. Oh, God! how very far away it was! He had long ago dropped his rifle to run more freely, and now he ran fast, stumbling as he ran, falling sometimes on his face, tearing his flesh with the prickly bushes. And yet he rose and ran on, never thinking of pain, to fall once more. But he did get nearer; yes, very much nearer. Now at last he could see their forms. Was it a dance of joy they were dancing, and were those screams part of a Bacchanalian meat orgie—or what? No, no! He put his thumbs to his ears and ran off again into the desert. For he was too late!

And so Johann Eckert, who had done a dreadful deed, sat all night on the warm sand under the quiet stars until the thin moon sank below the horizon. Then the paler stars followed one by one, until none was left but the softly shining planet which heralded the dawn. The long dark desert grew greyer, but was still silent, until the stone-hid grasshoppers chirruped to the day. The awakened insects in the scant brush and grass hummed softly, and the whole earth awoke, and the man still sat there, with his head upon his hands, afraid to look upon the light. For he heard even yet, or thought that he heard, a dreadful yelling

of death and agony borne upon the slow breeze which bent the lighter grasses and fanned his burning forehead.

He did not move for a long time—not until the sun was half-way up the bright clear sky. Long ago the oxen had gone towards the pool. Looking, he saw them stay at a little distance from it, as though in doubt. At last he rose and followed them, like a man walking in a dream or a condemned prisoner going to the scaffold.

There was a very strange and awful silence about that solitary water. Did not these Hottentots sleep late, and in strangely cramped attitudes? Surely they did. And above he saw specks far aloft in the morning sky, which he knew to be vultures who would presently come to drink. He whispered so to himself as he inspanned the remaining oxen, who had at first feared to go to the pool because so many Hottentots were drinking there in silence, without moving. He himself would go away in thirst. He could hardly drink such water.

As he worked getting his team ready, he looked at the cover of the waggon, which was stabbed with spears. Three or four assegais hung down from the canvas. One was lying inside. But he looked even more curiously at an extinguished brand which was

in the clenched hand of one of his enemies. He had come very near. Johann had never thought of their setting the waggon on fire. It might have been for nothing, he said to himself, nodding his head and trying to moisten his parched lips. Then he started and asked, "It—it—what would have been for nothing—murder, eh?" He cried hoarsely, "No, no!" and started the waggon homeward once more. But he could not speak to the oxen, and had to use his whip to set them in motion. The iron pot he left behind. As he went away the great circles of the sailing vultures grew less and less. But the centre of their circles was still the pool of water.

When Johann reached home he told many of his troubles to Emily, after she had become a little reconciled to the bitterness of fate, and could speak without tears of him she had so loved. He was always talking of Rudolf.

"He dreamed of you the night he died, and waking, he called your name. Without him I did badly. Through that I lost so many of the oxen. They died in the desert."

He never told her how. No, he has not even told it to Gretchen yet, although he means to when he has made up his mind as to whether he did right. But

though he has children of his own to work for by this time, he cannot yet settle that question. For, you see, he is but a simple-minded German peasant after all who is not learned in casuistry. And even I am not quite sure.

THE PLOT OF HIS STORY.

THE PLOT OF HIS STORY.

A FEW of his older friends thought that Geoffrey Windover made a mistake in his choice of a wife when he at last married, for even before her marriage Mrs. Windover showed signs of developing into one of those women to whom society is absolutely necessary. But her friends very reasonably commended his choice. Miss Vale, though amiable and fascinating, was not in possession of the two thousand a year that Mrs. Windover controlled; for Geoffrey's earnings as a novelist amounted then to that sum. And two thousand a year meant another nice house to go to. And many people went.

Windover was a hard worker, and hard workers are apt to let everything but their own work take care of itself. Perhaps he had married in order to be freed to some extent from the responsibility of looking after his own earnings. He allowed his wife to do exactly as she pleased, and was so little jealous of her time that she occasionally doubted his true affection. Though his books dealt very largely with the relations of the sexes, they did not touch them with any

very modern spirit. The older type of woman, the beatified slave of the ideal Englishman, was his type, and it was a curious instance of the common failure of men to apply their knowledge that, regarding his wife as such, he did not see how dangerous his neglect of her might be. He was never disturbed by any feeling of jealousy; he never deliberately thwarted her once to indulge her twice in accordance with some of his theories. Yet the men of his stories often did so, and Windover, from his books, was credited by the ignorant with much knowledge of women. It is doubtful whether women ever thought so; certainly, Mrs. Windover did not.

Her love of society as a girl was born of that unrest which comes to those who feel dissatisfied with their surroundings—who feel that something, somewhere and somehow, is wrong, but who lack the analytical power to solve the riddle until Time solves it for them. Every time she accepted an invitation it was an experiment; she went out with the hope of coming home wiser. The vulgar ambition of mere marriage hardly touched her. Yet marriage was often in her thoughts, without a doubt. But her knowledge did not become enlarged through society; it was much that she did not lose even her desire for it, and rank herself in mind with the other uninteresting

candidates for matrimony who sat unable to be themselves for want of the simple knowledge of what they were.

To live is to learn ; but how to live and how to learn ? This girl saw, with intense curiosity, that many of the married women she met with were quite as different from herself as the very men. Did marriage make this difference ? Certainly not to men, for there was not that difference between the married and unmarried men. Then some of the married women were quite as foolish as the girls themselves. She noticed that some women were very interesting to men, and that these were of the incomprehensibly changed class. It was to the girl's acute intellect almost possible to gauge the man by the kind of woman he talked to. She detested those who talked to the girls and to the calm, placid, mindless beauties. She was angry at her own lack of expression, at her own present feminine status, when she failed to interest a man who pleased her, and who was pleased with those of her own sex whom she so critically examined. It seemed evident to her that the only way to become interesting was to get married ; and even then the experiment was doubtful.

The way to marriage was love, of course. That her instinct taught her. But what was love ? and how

should she recognise it? The novelists had told her, with practical unanimity, that she would know; and as the stories ended so generally with marriage, it seemed probable that the novelists were right. Surely they would not stop at the most interesting part if the woman was to discover that she had made a mistake. She once appealed in a tentative way to her mother to be enlightened on the subject; but Mrs. Vale was a conventional and undeveloped woman, who had practically ruined the bright life of a clever husband by absolutely refusing to learn anything new. Her only method of preserving innocence was to keep it ignorant. By repulsing that father's child she piqued the girl's curiosity, and aggravated her unrestfulness. But when Margaret was twenty she knew little more of real life than she had done when fifteen. Then she met Geoffrey Windover. Though nearly twice her years, he was still a very young man, both in appearance and strength. His reputation was brilliant; his knowledge dazzled her; her unconscious flattery moved him; his interest stirred her affections lightly, for she was young and greatly alive. He wooed her, and married her in six months.

If this was the entrance to the temple of knowledge, the novitiate was bitter. It took her but a

little while—how little she confided to none—to find that she hated her husband with a curious intensity that made her seem vile to herself. She fought against it strenuously, but her battles were in vain. With the utmost difficulty she concealed her hate from Geoffrey. Once he fell very ill, and then she almost loved him again. She hoped that life would henceforth be endurable. Her hope was vain. A child was born: at any rate, he was the father of a being she only gradually grew to love intensely. Then the little girl died. She again went greatly into society—not, as she had done before, to learn; but to keep moving was her only safety.

Geoffrey Windover felt the loss of his child deeply—much more deeply, perhaps, than the gradual drifting from him of his wife. For all his knowledge, he was ignorant of the meaning of marriage. He had not even marked the mental development of his wife. He had lived by himself for many years; he demanded little more than reasonable comfort at home and good attendance and obedience. To such men home is only a superior kind of lodgings. To keep this home luxurious he worked very hard, and never even suspected that he alone got any satisfaction out of his money. He would have been quite content if another child had been born and lived.

But the next child died when only a week old. For long months before its birth Mrs. Windover had been terribly depressed, and this melancholy practically killed her infant. She reflected very deeply; or, rather, an intuition came to her. She began to understand some things, very vaguely at first, but when thought brought no contradiction, and facts brought corroboration, she touched hands at last with truth. And yet she never spoke to Geoffrey. How shall a woman prove her intuitions to a logical man?

Yet without speaking there was for a time a harshness in their relations. They again visibly ameliorated, but her struggles told on her health. She saw her beauty waning, and could not see that another sadder beauty became hers. Now she understood those women who had seemed puzzles to her; or, at any rate, she thought she understood. For the first time in her life she had true homage from men—from men she understood and respected; and, oddly enough, she doubted whether her husband—if he had not been her husband—would have showed any interest in her now. The man who is taken by the undeveloped woman is often continuously irritated into suspicion by the results of development consequent on marriage, which the wife cannot wholly hide.

He wonders how he came to love her, doubts her stability of thought, or attributes his new discovery of the new facts of her character to her caring no longer to hide what she is. To him change is abhorrent: unless, indeed, the woman educates him unconsciously. But the man who willingly and humbly learns of his wife, or of any other woman, things which she may reasonably know better than himself is rare indeed. And while Mrs. Windover wondered whether Geoffrey would care in the least for her if he had met her as she then was, she knew that she herself would class him among those utterly impossible as husbands to any but the undeveloped woman, created by the demands of slave-owning man.

It marks an era in any woman's history when she begins to discern that, practically and grossly speaking, her sex are domestic animals: that to them man has been not only man, but a god: that he has actually formed many of their tastes, has moulded their thoughts, kindly provided them a morality totally irrespective of their needs, and done his very utmost to disable and discourage them from thinking for themselves. If any woman discovers the disapprobation of the world for any of her acts results in a doubtful verdict of her own conscience, she is on the way to

freedom. But the shackles are hard to throw off. Margaret Windover, in the first year of her marriage, often condemned herself with shame for vague thoughts. Even when she came to the conclusion that the vast bulk of her own class consisted of more or less unhappy women, she was still half inclined to think that the fault lay on their side. She had been so carefully taught that marriage was usually happy that it took her a long time to doubt this.

On one of those rare occasions, after the first year, when Geoffrey accompanied her into society, they met Hinton, a writer of social essays, who was by no means a favourite of his, for Windover was practically a Conservative, though posing as a Radical in very Conservative circles. Hinton had lately written a paper on marriage, treating it historically, and without any great evident hostility. Yet it was known that his opinions on the subject were heterodox.

"I fancy," said Geoffrey, "that you would have spoken differently about it if you had dared."

"Dared!" replied Hinton, with a shrug of the shoulders; "it is hardly a question of courage. I am allowed to go so far. If I go any further, it is the editors who either don't dare, or who are utterly opposed to my views personally. One must do what one can. I showed, I think, very satisfactorily that

women ought to be very miserable, and that if they are not, in the majority of cases it betokens an utter want of intellect."

Mrs. Windover sat listening, but took no part in the conversation. Geoffrey replied with some animation:

"Ought to be unhappy? Well, if you think so, perhaps. But I maintain that they are not; indeed, they ought to be happy. It is we who do the struggling. Those who are placed beyond the reach of poverty—in our class, at any rate—have only sentimental grievances. Why should they want what you call freedom, when they have everything given them, when their work is right at hand, when their duties are obvious?"

Hinton turned his palms up with a foreign gesture.

"I think I have heard the same arguments used for slavery. Didn't the Southerners say all that against the ungodly doctrine of emancipation? If it were not true that on the whole the average man uses his power with a certain degree of kindness, you would have no ground to stand on at all. As it is, most women don't know they are slaves; or, if they know it, are afraid to struggle for themselves. The negroes were not all on the side of emancipation, and those who opposed it doubtless thought the others very ungrateful, or at any rate rash. And as to your

notion of sentimental grievances: why, they are the worst kind of grievance. And I think it is usual of men to call those grievances sentimental which they cannot understand. They are natural ones—the result of nature not yet crushed in women. The only way to begin to understand women is to recognise the fact that they are made by us and by Nature as well. On the whole, I will back Nature to get the best of us in the end!"

To Windover this was more or less nonsense, and even if sense, quite beyond his formula for the composition of woman. He led the conversation into other channels, and then Mrs. Windover talked brightly enough. But his last words to Hinton that night were: "You shall see what I have to say on this subject. For some time I have been thinking of writing a novel of married life; and, though you may not think it, I shall be quite on the side of the woman."

"Of your particular kind?" asked Hinton, with a faint shade of contempt in his tone.

"Not in the least. The heroine will be anything but to my real liking. Yet I think I shall have the courage not to condemn her for leaving her husband."

"Then of course you will make the husband a perfect brute?"

"Not in the least. He will be kind enough in his way, and on the whole a very good fellow."

Hinton laughed.

"Well, I shall look for it with some curiosity." And then to himself: "If you have been studying your own wife, you may really know something of the best part of the sex. But I doubt it."

Little influence as Margaret had on her husband, it was undoubtedly due to her that Windover thought of attempting work of a kind differing greatly from his well-constructed, but rather shallow, love-stories, whose end was merely the beginning of life. She had with some difficulty concealed her impatience with much of his work; now and again it peeped out so that he felt it. And as a writer of any kind is always more or less drawn to reality, and the reality that he experiences, marriage began to be looked on by Windover as a possible motive for a story. He knew in a vague way that Margaret was dissatisfied, restless, and unhappy; he knew, too, that she often thought him incapable of understanding the drift of her thoughts; the favourite women of his novels were unreal to her. He began to conceive the idea of showing her that he did understand women. Yet he had what must always be fatal to comprehension, the purely male contempt for the *femme incomprise.*

Filled to the very throat as he was with preconceived notions of what women should be, he could never find out what they were. And as pathology, or the true knowledge of disease, is essential to a scientific knowledge of cure, he could never hope to be less a quack than the average man is when he attempts to solve feminine problems which he cannot understand. The one thing women ask is sympathy, and sympathy is instinctive comprehension. *La femme incomprise* is the most notable figure of our time. In the best examples she is prophetic; she declines to belong to the past; she has gone beyond male theories, which date from barbarism. It is the irony of fate that women, having been forced by men to make love the main business of their lives, should have surpassed their teachers. In the matter of the sexes an intelligent woman is a specialist; man is the amateur. And the amateur who is also a patron, holding power and the purse, becomes too often monumental in conceit.

It would be saying too much to declare that Margaret Windover thought thus. But this was the real drift of her mind. On the very rare occasions when Geoffrey made any remarks about his new book she observed how blindly he believed that he knew the sex. He never said, doubtfully, "Do you

think?" or, "What do you think?" being ready to gather something from her. He believed that he knew the woman that he imagined as the chief character of his story, and by the finish of his work, its lack of suggestiveness, the omission of a margin of doubt in the determination and conflict of motive, he made her neither feminine nor really human. That, perhaps, was the fault of the school of his generation. Yet in the main facts of the story he came near enough to objective truth. To paint the result of neglect on a woman of a clearly conceived type is not very difficult, and it is not hard to rouse and sustain interest in a story when it is early seen that the question is whether a woman neglected by a commonplace fool will leave him for a man of some brains and attractiveness. Nor did Windover lack any of the qualifications for making a popular novel. He was a master of construction, and his style was bright; he worked slowly, with great care, and with much re-writing. In his earlier days he used to turn out two books a year; he now restricted himself to one.

During the first six months of his new work he went out less and less with his wife. Ordinary society bored him, Bohemianism disgusted him. Freedom of manners was as objectionable to him as

freedom of thought in morality. His only recreation was a ride in the Park in the afternoon ; if he left off writing by ten or eleven in the evening, he went to his club in Piccadilly. Taking some interest in politics, he rather affected a kind of *dilettante* Radicalism which was not very offensive to his Conservative friends. He was ready to applaud—*à priori*, at least—freedom in political thought ; in religion an unaggressive Agnosticism did not blow the faint embers of his vague religion to any fiery wrath ; but in commonplace morality, especially when it concerned the actions of woman, he was as fierce as he would have been centuries before in politics, or fifty years ago in religion. Fanaticism is now transferred mainly to morality, and many a democratic atheist would be a domestic Torquemada.

When Windover had in the seventh month of his slow and careful work got well into the second volume, Margaret ceased going out as much as she had been accustomed to do. She often stayed at home three or four days in the week. A keen observer might have noticed that she paid more attention to Geoffrey than was usual with her of late. Sometimes there was a curious ring in her voice. She hesitated in her speech ; occasionally she broke off in the middle of a sentence. When she looked at her husband, there

was at times a gleam in her eyes which looked like pity. And yet, for all that, she hated him much more than ever. Once she asked him how his work was getting on ; and when he replied, with a certain satisfaction, that he was getting into the very thick of it, and that it was very difficult to manage, she asked why.

"Well," said Geoffrey, "the book is new ground to me. And to treat a story of intrigue without shocking the public is difficult. I daresay I shall never publish the story at all. It might hurt me with the libraries. Still, it is very interesting. My heroine has just fallen in love with another man, and I have not settled yet whether she will leave her husband or not."

Mrs. Windover made no more inquiries, and was silent during the remainder of lunch. Though she had an engagement that evening, she remained at home, writing to say that she had a headache ; yet she was as well physically as anyone can be who is mentally tortured.

The result of her attempts to remain more at home was to make Geoffrey believe that she was more contented. And if so, he was very glad in his own way. Believing this, he was much more affectionate to her than he had been, with the result that the

pained tones in her voice gave place to a dull anguish; and she ceased to look at Geoffrey with anything like pity in her eyes. She began going out again; for days she was hardly at home after lunch; sometimes Windover ate that meal alone. His estimate of his heroine took a certain bitterness; and there promised to be a lack of homogeneousness in her character. He had said to Hinton that he hoped not to condemn her for leaving her husband, and yet he began to make the husband the neglected one. It seemed likely that he would have to rewrite the first volume. As his own circumstances acted on his work, his work reacted on him and Margaret. Sometimes he put in his man's mouth things he himself had said; once or twice he made a bitter remark to Margaret which he had written the night before.

The breach between them began to widen very perceptibly. For days they hardly spoke. When they went away together in August and September to Windover's favourite place, Ryde, Margaret recovered a little; evidently she made a great effort to be cheerful; she tried bitterly hard to do everything in her power to render Geoffrey happy. Yet that kind of service can never help greatly; unless the man is an utter fool. And Windover, for all his obstinacy of self-belief, had some kind of intuition. He felt

intuitively that Margaret was miserable. This made him hard and harder. It was her duty to be happy with him. Both were glad when that holiday was over. They had seen so much of each other in that long six weeks that it was a relief to be almost parted in their London home. And as town began to fill again, Margaret resumed her visiting. Night after night she was at "At Homes"; she went with parties to the theatre; sometimes she stayed away for a few days at a friend's house in Hertfordshire. In all this excitement, this ceaseless toil, this unending round, she grew pale and wan and thin. Her nerves often gave way. Twice at least her husband found her in tears, and he was irritated into saying things which dried them most effectually. It is easy for an unhappy woman of her character to cry talking to a man she loves, but not to one she hates.

Yet, in spite of this, she on several occasions made efforts to take Geoffrey out with her. He coldly repulsed her. And one night she laughed when he refused. He looked up, and she turned away. When halfway downstairs she burst into tears, and returned to her room. When her maid came to her she sent the carriage away. Half an hour after, Geoffrey went out to his club. She put on a dressing-gown at eleven o'clock, and went down to his writing-room.

The manuscript of his novel lay in a neat pile on the right hand of his desk. She sat down and fingered it idly. Presently she turned over the leaves, and saw in Geoffrey's clear handwriting a sentence which arrested her attention. It was in the first volume. "Is there any position more exquisitely miserable than that of a married woman who has grown to hate her husband, when that husband affords her no valid excuse for leaving him?"

How curious it was that he should write this! Was it not remarkable even that he should have seen so much? And yet—— Surely if a woman is exquisitely miserable with a man, is not that a valid excuse? Geoffrey had talked to Hinton of sentimental grievances, treating them with scorn. But this was a grievance of that contemptible order. Have people any right to live together when there is hate on either side—ay, or indifference only? The world said so—said that there was not only a right, but a duty. But each succeeding generation contradicts the past. Besides—— And then Margaret looked straight out beyond the walls of that close room. Her eyes softened, a flush made her cheeks rosy, her bosom heaved. As her thoughts came quickly and her vision led to imagined action, her eyes closed, her mouth half opened, her head fell back a little, the

fibres of her body relaxed. Suddenly she shivered, and her heart beat rapidly; she rose, and, looking down, left the room.

During November Mrs. Windover gave at least three parties in her own house. Except on those nights, she was rarely at home. Out of her own house she was brilliant, excitable, nervous. People said she looked ill, and yet her strength seemed inexhaustible. She might be pale and thin, but she never suffered from headaches, her skin was clear, her eyes bright. It was only in her own room and when alone that she broke down: she shook sometimes as though poisoned by ague; she shivered at the sound of Geoffrey's footstep. She very often avoided him by having breakfast a little earlier; she feigned illness, and lay in another part of the house. Yet sleep she did not. She often lighted the gas in the middle of the night, and sat looking at herself in the glass. She noted painfully a new line or two in her face; the discovery of two or three threads of silver in her hair was like a blow. She wanted more than ever to be beautiful; it was, indeed, only in this last year that she desired it very ardently. It was a new, a real reason to hate Geoffrey that he was making her old and worn by the very misery of his presence. Then she looked at herself with a kind of contempt. She

put her hands across her bosom and shivered. When she extinguished the light she was for a time less unhappy, even though she cried until she fell asleep. Then she sometimes smiled. Often she woke up with a smile on her lips, and for one exquisite moment, before reality rushed over her again, she was quite happy. And then day, and doubt, and misery, and a long, long conflict.

But one night early in December she came home at about twelve with a new expression on her face. It was the look of one who had at last made up her mind. She behaved as usual, but there was a decision about her movements, about her speech, about her looks. She did not avoid Geoffrey's eye, but met his glances quite coldly, opposing to him an impenetrable shield. All the next day she devoted to looking over letters; she went through a long set of accounts with the housekeeper; she spent some hours writing. In the afternoon Geoffrey came into her boudoir, looked at her, and went out again. As he did not speak, she made no attempt to do so. It would have been very difficult. They dined at eight, in comparative silence. Geoffrey seemed much preoccupied, and after a very light meal, rose.

"You are going out to-night?" he said at the door.

"Yes, to the Meades'," was her answer, in a low voice. For a moment she hesitated, and, with a curious effort, added, "Will you come?"

"Thank you, no," said Windover. "I am very busy. I am getting to the end of the book. I think I can finish to-night."

Margaret rose, and stood by the fire, looking down.

"Cannot you put off the end, and come with me?"

"I have not noticed that you have been so eager for my society this last year or so," replied Geoffrey coldly, "that I should leave my work at your casual request."

He left the room. At nine o'clock Mrs. Windover went upstairs, and dressed with unusual rapidity, and with unusual plainness, for her. At half-past she came down, paused at Geoffrey's door for a moment, and went into the dining-room. She sat down and stared into the fire. Her colour came and went, came and went; her hands shook. Suddenly she sprang up, and, going to the library, entered it quickly. Geoffrey looked up, with a tinge of annoyance on his face.

"I wish you to come with me to-night, Geoffrey!" she said quickly.

"Did I not say that I was busy, and could not?"

"Perhaps you prefer the creatures of your imagination to reality, Geoffrey?"

"They are easier to get on with."

"Easier to manage?"

"Easier to manage," assented Geoffrey coldly.

"Do you think that human beings are to be *managed?*" she asked, with a touch of contempt in her voice.

"Some are not, I know."

There was silence for a minute, and Geoffrey fidgeted uneasily with his papers.

"Then you will not come when I ask you? I want you to do this for me to-night. Do I never do anything for you?"

"Perhaps as unwillingly as I should come, even if I were not busy. But come I cannot. I have to finish this; I have come to the end, to the crisis——"

"To the catastrophe?"

He nodded coldly.

"Then good-night, Geoffrey."

He turned to his desk, and wrote fast before she was out of the house.

He wrote till twelve o'clock with ease and rapidity. The scene was vividly in his mind, words came fluently to him. At twelve he stayed for a

few moments, lighted his pipe, and sat down smoking. He began the last half of the last chapter. But as he wrote he became seriously uneasy in his mind; sometimes Margaret came before his mental vision and disturbed him. Growing tired, and yet being dominated by the desire to finish, his brain got a trifle confused. The final scene, as he had planned it, was a violent quarrel, leading to the absolute parting of the husband and wife. But now he almost unconsciously changed this; working with some restraint, he toned the dialogue down until it became rather conversational than tragic — it seemed more artistic to him. The man spoke coldly, the woman spoke more coldly still; when suddenly she stopped half-way in a sentence and said, "Then, good-night." Geoffrey wrote this, and held the pen suspended above the page, while a curious expression came to his face. He looked up, stared at the place where Margaret had last stood. He sat quietly for a minute, and rose. Going to the front door, he found it unlocked: Margaret had a key, and would have fastened the door on her return. A glance at his watch showed him that it was past one. Going upstairs, he looked in all the rooms: she was not there. He went into the dining-room, wandered round it idly for a minute or two, and returned to the library. He sat down by

the fire, intently listening for the sound of wheels. He heard it strike two. Should he go to the Meades'? In a minute he was in a cab, but he found the house in darkness, and returned at once. But Margaret was not there. She never came back.

ON BEAR CREEK.

ON BEAR CREEK.

If I, Thomas Ticehurst, formerly mate of the *Vancouver*, were to tell you how I got to be loafing round Thomson Forks, British Columbia, it would take quite a book to do it in. And the fact of the matter is that I once wrote one, giving all my adventures in that country, and not a single publisher would have anything to do with it; so I shall see, before I try again, how you like my trip with gold-hunting Mackintosh. I was loafing about Conlan's bar-room at Thomson Forks when he came in for a drink, and I took a fancy to him at once; in fact, I respected him physically—and it takes a pretty big man for me to look at in that light. He came from Michigan, and was like some I have seen from that State: as strong as a bull. He wore a red beard, and had an eye like an eagle's, and a hand like a ham for size and a sledge-hammer for hardness. As we stood side by side, he looked at me and I looked at him, and presently I asked him to drink. Before long we got quite confidential, and I told him I was thinking of farming.

"Bah!" said he, "a man like you a moss-back—you a farmer! You're fit for something better. What's a few head of rowdy steers when you might go mining, and be worth ten thousand dollars any day?"

"Or when you mightn't," I put in.

With that, Mackintosh put his hand into his pocket and pulled out a handful of quartz specimens. He gave me a lecture on quartz and alluvial mining, which made him so dry that, in quenching his thirst, I myself began to get a little excited, and before we parted that evening he had extracted a promise from me to go up to the Big Bend with him, to hunt for the vein from which a piece of drift quartz had come, which he carried round as representing what would be worth millions if he could only find it. For I had a little money, as I had owned, and Mac had none. But he would supply the knowledge, I the stores; and if I bought the pack ponies, he would guide them through the wild forests which hung upon the slopes of the Selkirk Mountains. Perhaps I had made a foolish bargain, and yet I trusted Mac instinctively; and considering how my venture turned out, I have no reason to complain.

I was a regular green-hand in that country, and the life and manners of my new acquaintances were

amusing, if at times a little dangerous. I was staying where I had met Mackintosh, at Ned Conlan's, whose hotel fronted the forks of the river, and whose bar was perpetually filled with men going up and down the country, whose main talk was of the threatened railroad, which would ruin everything. Major Rogers, the pioneer of the road in the Selkirks, was still there, and his name was on every tongue.

"He will die there, and never come out!"

"He will be chawed up by a grizzly, sure!"

"He will starve to death!"

These were a few of the prophecies heard about a man who has since made a name for enduring pluck and resolution; and considering that I was going up into the same country, it began to try my nerves. I spoke to Mac.

"Don't listen to 'em, old man," said he, contemptuously; "there ain't one of 'em knows what they talk about. They never was there, and never will be till they've made a smooth level road for 'em, or put the ties down. That's my tumtum"—which meant, "That's my opinion." For, like all British Columbians and dwellers there, the language he used was perpetually interlarded with scraps of Chinook, the Indian trading jargon. The next morning we went together on the steamer up the lakes.

When Mac and I reached the head of the Shushap Lakes, about one hundred miles from Thomson Forks, we found some pack ponies, or Indian cayuses, there, and bought two, on which we put our stores. They were very small, miserable-looking animals, and I said so to Mac.

"Never mind, pard," said he; "they're tough, and it takes a lot to kill one of 'em."

"I should be sorry to get on one, Mac," I answered. "I should break his back."

Mac smiled.

"Mebbe he'd break your neck, old man. Can you sit a bucking horse?"

"I can ride," I answered proudly, for I had often ridden, and had been told I had a pretty good seat.

Mac looked at me with a grin on his face, and went away. Now, as I found out afterwards, if there is one thing a Western American, or an Australian either, cannot resist, it is to put a "tenderfoot" on a buckjumper. Either will run the risk of breaking his own brother's neck in order to see him thrown off; and Mac—though I know he liked me—was not so far above the common herd as to be able to resist the temptation of proving I couldn't ride as well as I thought.

In ten minutes he came back, leading a rather

fresher-looking animal than either of ours, and with him came an old white-haired man and a rough, loud-talking individual whom I disliked at once.

"This is my pardner, a Hinglishman, gentlemen, and he says he can ride—has done it often. Tom, this is an old pard of mine, Hank Patterson" (introducing with a wave of his hand the white-haired man), "and this is Montana Bill. They want to see how you ride, for both of 'em reckons to be judges of that kind of work."

I could see, from the grins on the faces all round, that the animal destined for my trial was an awkward customer, but I couldn't well back out.

"Very well," said I boldly; "I'll ride him if you like—that is, if you'll saddle him, for your saddles beat me altogether with the cinches for girths and rings instead of buckles. Saddles, indeed! why, this one weighs forty pounds."

So it did, and most of the others were little less.

"All right, Tom," said Mac cheerfully; "we'll put the saddle on the cayuse for you; and when you're on, mind you stay on. Don't get off in a hurry; it looks bad in a big man. When you've done with him, and had your little ride, get off gracefully. Now do!"

Hank Patterson and Montana Bill burst into a

roar of laughter at Mac's wit, but set about saddling the horse at once.

He was not more than thirteen hands high, and was very thin, but there was a strange look in his eyes that did not please me as he stood perfectly quiet while the saddle was being put on. When it was done, and Mac had made him grunt by the way he cinched him up, his back was already in a little curve. My partner turned to me—

"Here you are, Tom: warranted quiet to ride or pack, perfectly sound and rising seven; will face a grizzly while you shoot, and go a hundred miles a day on the prairie. Get on and try him."

I went towards the animal, and slipped the bridle-rein quietly over his head; but when I put my foot in the stirrup, he made a jump away. This happened half-a-dozen times, and then Mac blindfolded him with his hat while I mounted.

"Now, Tom," said he, "are you there? Have you got a good seat? and have you made up your mind to stay with him? If so, the show is going to begin. Look out!" And he took the hat away suddenly.

It was the first time I ever did it, and it was the last. The first thing he did was to nearly pull me over his head by the bridle—for he put his head down

between his fore-legs with a suddenness that surprised me—and his back was bent in a curve that prevented me from seeing anything of him in front of me. It was like being on a saddle all by itself, and on a saddle that had made up its mind to get from between my legs. He made a bound up and came down stiff-legged, with a shock that shook me all over, and before I recovered from that I received another one rather worse. I rose an inch from the saddle, then two, then three, and each time he struck earth I struck him harder and harder, like a vessel on the rocks.

Gradually he flung me higher and higher, and then I grabbed the horn of the saddle desperately, while the lake and mountains, the men and trees, got mixed up like the shifting colours in a kaleidoscope, and then I went blind. The next moment the infuriated saddle was gone, and I sat down on the ground with a thump that nearly dislocated every bone in my body, while I heard a tremendous shout of laughter from the three spectators, who were pitiless. When I recovered my sight I saw my steed about fifty yards off still bucking, and from the fashion he went to work, I was surprised that I had remained on him so long. Riding an earthquake or a tornado would be easy after it; and if, as I have

read, the naturalist Waterton rode a crocodile, I have my doubts whether he could have stayed with a Western American broncho.

When I got up I was a little "riled."

"Well, Mac," said I, "can *you* ride him?"

"No," he answered.

"Then what the devil are you laughing at?" said I angrily; whereupon they all shouted again. It is ridiculous, but it is true, that none of them could, and yet they put me on him, and laughed to see what he did with me.

"Oh, man!" said Mac, "but it was fine: it beat a circus all to nothin'! You'll have to join a show as the 'Champion Rider of the West.' Oh, it was bully!" And he rolled over, roaring again with the others. I shrugged my shoulders and then laughed too, for the cayuse had taken to rolling; and in the process he ruined Montana Bill's saddle: at which I was glad, and he was furious.

In the morning we started on the trail across the Gold Range to the Columbia, and in five days camped on the Columbia River, across which, in the big bend of the stream, were the Selkirk Mountains, where there was reported to be much gold. And Mac was confident he knew where to find it.

It was now April—about the best time for going

prospecting, as the whole summer was before us. It was a new and strange experience to me, and I think Mac often repented at first his having taken such an inexperienced partner, whom he had to teach even to handle the shovel in the proper way, for the long-handled instrument in vogue on the west coast of America was unfamiliar to me. Then I made ludicrous failures in packing the ponies, and was some time before I could get the hang of the "diamond knot," which is the only way to keep the burden on the pony's back. But at last, after crossing the Illecilliwet once, and after a few little excursions to the right and left, we came to Mac's own particular creek, where he had been once before, and settled down to build our camp.

We were among almost inaccessible mountains, for on our right—that is, to the south—there were three sharp peaks covered with perpetual snow at their tops, and a thick growth of hemlock, spruce, and cedar on their lower slopes, while on the left a great cliff of more than a thousand feet in height rose so perpendicularly that it hid from us, who were right under its wall, the greater mountain of which it was a buttress. Underneath, in places, were large portions of rock broken away, and I remarked to Mac that we were in a dangerous position.

"Well, pard," said he, "it may be dangerous, but you'll soon forget about that; at any rate, it's the only level spot round here, and we've got to chance it. Mebbe, if we moved out further from the wall the mountain up there might just dump a few hundred tons of snow on us, while if we stay here she'll just shoot it out into the crick, my son!"

And with that he started to work on the tent.

The way we had come up—for we were some thousand feet above the level of the Columbia—was scarcely to be seen, for the slight trail came out of the thick forest just under the little plateau on which we were, and wound round one of the rocks which had fallen from the summit of the cliff. Farther down it followed the roaring creek, which ran two hundred feet to the south of the wall, and crossed it just at the very last spot where it was possible to see it from the edge of our camping-ground. It was in a narrow cañon-like valley, that sent a small but lively tributary into Mac's Creek, that he expected to make a find, for it was there he had come across the piece of drift quartz showing gold in it which was to be the index to fortune for him and me. But I thought—and truly I was right—that the possibility of our finding where the bit of rock came from was small, and said as much to Mac.

He nodded.

"Well, Tom," he said, smoking slowly, "you're right, I daresay; but gold-hunting is like gambling: only we stake our lives, and time, and labour agin Nature's gold. But still, it's a game of skill—'tain't poker, though; we can't bluff *her*, but there is some skill in it, though that don't go for as much as men reckon. But look here, this is the piece of drift; now I find it in that creek, therefore it comes from up that creek, and not from any other. Now, mind you, that creek ain't so very long: it peters out altogether a thousand feet up, and just where it does there ain't any rock-slide from the peak that would send this down. Therefore, it comes somewhere in that thousand feet. Now, another thing: about three hundred feet from where the creek begins there is a bit of ground where it runs level, and there is a fall there; three hundred feet from where we are there's another fall, just like the other, only bigger. Now, I found that rock in betwixt the two, but nigher the lower one. Now, jest you see, if it had broken off above the first fall it would not have washed over there. You can see it could not when you go up there. So it comes somewhere within two hundred feet of that creek. It must come there, and near where I found it there's a vein: you bet your life there is, and we two are going

to find it; you bet your little tin joss on that. And we will."

"You know better than I, Mac," said I; "but couldn't it have come there in snow?"

"You don't know the mountains, my son," said he. "I'll tell you, where snow slides once it slides again, and where it slides it clears all before it—trees, every stick of 'em, and everything. It's like the hand o' the Almighty. But it keeps its track; there's a snow-slide right over our head."

"The devil!" said I, looking up.

"It ain't a big one, though; and then there's one far on the other side of the little creek—but there's none between. So snow didn't bring it there: I tell you it didn't; for if it did, all them trees would have been stacked down at the bottom of the hill, like that lot over yonder;" and he pointed to a pile just beyond our big creek.

"How did they come there, Mac?"

"Well, I guess they grew over our heads once; but three years ago there was a bigger snow than usual, and when it slid it cleared 'em off—dropped up right there."

"But hang it, Mac!" I said, jumping up; "I knew this was a dangerous spot to be in, and every word you say proves it."

He smoked calmly.

"What's the use of getting excited? There wasn't much snow this last winter, and mebbe it won't slide at all. It didn't two years ago when I was here; besides, we've got the camp fixed, and there ain't another place within a mile that's half as handy; besides, there's grass here for the cayuses."

He was so cool and calm about the matter that I laughed—a little angrily at first; but seeing his grey eyes twinkle in the light of the camp fire, with such content with himself and the situation, I laughed at last good-humouredly, and accepted the situation.

In three days our search began, and it lasted for three months or more, during which time I grew as despondent as hard work and the mountain air would let me. We began at the higher fall, and looked at every likely spot until we reached the lower one; then we went back, and went higher on each side until we again came down to the fall. Then I began to complain a little.

"Mac," I said one evening, as I was lying by the camp fire when supper was done, "your calculation of the short distance on the creek where the vein lies was all very well as to length, but it seems to me it fails on the question of height entirely. We may have to clamber a thousand feet on both sides of the

stream before we strike it" (or "before we don't," I added to myself, in a low voice).

"Why, sonny," said Mac good-humouredly, "perhaps you are right, but then, again, perhaps you ain't. Besides, supposin' I hadn't made that little calculation, we should have had the whole length and height of the thundering creek to hunt. So you see that's where we get the bulge; d'ye see, sonny?"

It seemed no great catch to me, and I said so.

"Humph!" laughed my partner; "never you mind; you may strike it any time. Mebbe the next time you let go your hold and fall twenty feet you'll knock loose something, and show us just what we want; eh, old man?"

For that day I had tumbled from a rock through my own carelessness, and had a narrow escape of breaking my neck. Fortunately, I had fallen on a thick bush, and so saved myself from any serious harm.

The day following the evening of this conversation, while we were rather higher than we had been, we came upon the fresh sign of bear.

"Is it a grizzly, Mac?" I asked, for I had all a "tenderfoot's" dread of these animals.

"I dunno," he answered. "I ain't a professional hunter, and don't think they can tell, anyhow. Yet

he's a big fellow. Next time, mind we bring the rifles."

For we had got accustomed to leaving them at home on account of the extra weight to carry as we climbed the sides of the cañon.

Next morning I was sitting on a spur of rock just out of sight of Mac, who was using his pick round the corner, when I heard a kind of pig-like grunt behind me, and on looking round, I saw a brown bear. It was within ten feet of me, and as it was the first I had ever met at close quarters, I was more than a little alarmed. If we had been in a settled district, Bruin would have been more frightened of me than I was of him, for they soon get to find out that man is a dangerous animal, and leave him alone; or perhaps it may be that the more savage ones get killed, and only those who are timid and keep out of the way manage to survive. A friend of mine says that's pure Darwinism, but I don't care if it is: it seems likely enough. However, that is quite by the way, and meanwhile I am keeping the bear waiting. He was not inclined to be kept, however, and came past me with no more than a sniff and an ugly twinkle in his small eyes which quite frightened me. Perhaps it was as well that my rifle was out of my reach; for if I had shot at him without killing him, he would

probably have finished me before Mac could have come to the rescue. As he passed my tools he smelt them, and was particularly interested in the weapon—a 45-calibre Winchester, by the way—which he knocked down, and then he turned the corner. By that time I recovered my nerve.

"Look out, Mac!" I screamed at the top of my voice—not that any great shouting was needed—"here he comes!" I heard Mac drop his pick, and then "crack" went his rifle. Then it was his turn to shout.

"Look out, Tom!" and just as I got my rifle Bruin came round the corner again—for I don't think he saw my partner at all—and of course concluded that I was the one to blame. As he came round I fired, and hit him somewhere in the shoulder, and then as I dropped the lever to eject the cartridge the empty shell jammed, and would neither come out nor go back.

I dropped the weapon and scrambled like lightning up the rock above me, sending the loose earth and stones rattling down into the creek. The bear followed as fast as he could, and the way he climbed with two bullets in him was a "caution."

When I reached the top of the rock, I could find no easy way out. I was caught in a trap, unless

I dropped over again; and if I did, I might disable myself from moving. I yelled to Mac like a fiend, and I could hear him coming, cursing all the way. I picked up a big rock, weighing about eighty pounds, and as I did so the bear's head came up over the edge of the little plateau on which I stood. I threw the rock with all my force, and it struck him square in the centre of the forehead, and at the same moment Mac's rifle rang out sharply. Bruin had both paws now on the ledge, but he got no further. I saw him sway to and fro, the blood poured out of his mouth, and he fell back and rolled over and over. I went to the edge and watched his fall. He fell from where I had been sitting, and in a lump struck a small pine about twenty feet below, against which a rock weighing about a ton had lodged. I suppose the bear's weight or sudden shock was the last straw, for the tree gave with a sudden crack, and the bear and the stone rolled over and over, falling at last into the creek with a tremendous splash. He never moved again.

"A close call for you, Tom," said Mac, looking up at me. "Why did you only shoot once?"

"Look at the rifle," said I, scrambling down; "don't you see it jammed?"

Mac picked it up, and tried to work the lever.

"So it has. Well, they all will sometimes. But it's a good weapon."

Mac said "weepon," though, as so many Western men do.

"Let's go and cut him up, Tom," said he. "Fresh bear's meat is good, I guess; and he's fat, though it isn't the fall yet."

And he scrambled down the way the bear had gone. When he got down to the place where the broken pine was, he stopped for a moment, and looked up at me. "Come on, old man," he cried; "or are your nerves so shaken you can't come down?"

Then he dropped his eyes on the rock in front of him. He stood quiet for a moment, and then—

"By the great horn spoon and the tail of the sacred bull, we've got it!" he roared exultantly.

"Got it! Got what?" said I quietly.

"Great Scott! Holy Mackinaw! man, we've struck it—we've struck it!" he cried; and then he began to dance, throwing his hat up in the air.

"Struck what?" I cried. "Talk English, Mac, and don't be an ass!"

"Oh, you fool, you great seafaring fool!" he said. "What the thunder do you think we've struck? What are we looking for, you great galoot? Is it salt, or sugar, or is it—gold?"

And he cried "Hurrah!" in a voice that might have been heard for miles, and that was echoed "HURRAH!!! HURRAH!! hurrah!" faintly from the reverberating hills, like the repeated elfin screech of a mountain lake's sole steamer.

I scrambled down to him, and fell in a heap at his feet; and though I found myself bruised all over next day, I never noticed it, for I saw what I now knew to be gold quartz, and the gold was to be *seen* in it.

Mac turned suddenly quiet, and sat down. "Look here, pard," said he, smiling; "we owe that bear something. I'll take his hide off and have it tanned, and I'll mount his claws in gold, and we'll call this 'Bear Creek.' Perhaps it'll be a consolation to his relatives to know how famous he'll be. But meanwhile we'll eat him." And taking out a lump of the quartz, he looked at it lovingly, and went down to the bear. As we skinned it he talked.

"Look now, Tom," said he, "how queer things turn out. Three years ago, in the early spring, I saw that very rock fall and hit that tree. I did; and the next day I was prospecting right over this very ground. I found enough to tell me there was gold here somewhere, but it was only two years ago I

found the piece of drift. Now, I'll bet the whole mine—and there's millions in it—that it was that rock as broke off the very piece. And yet, if it hadn't fallen there I might have spotted this place before. But it don't matter; then you wouldn't have been in it, old man; and I'm glad you are. Shake hands, pard."

And he gripped me—though I'm strong enough myself—with a hand that was like getting caught in the nip of a block.

"Bully old bear!" said he, going on skinning; "bully old bear! Fine prospector he was, to be sure; yet to get killed so soon, just as he struck it. Did you hit him with that rock, Tom?"

"Yes," said I.

He put his hand on the bear just between the eyes, and then looked up.

"By the Lord, I should say you did! Man, it was you killed him, not I. Feel: his skull is smashed right in; every bone is broken. Hit him! well, I should smile."

It was true; I had fractured the frontal bone into fragments.

"Yes, I hit him a hard crack," said I.

"You did, pard. Say," said he suddenly, "where, in the name of thunder, did you learn to say your h's

that way? You must hev bin in America longer than you allow to learn 'em."

I stared in amazement.

"What do you mean, Mac?"

"Why, no Englishman says 'em right. ''Ouse' and ''orse' they say. I've heard scores, and never one different."

I roared with laughter.

"D—— it, Mac!" said I, when I got my voice back; "that's only quite uneducated Englishmen. I always did, I hope."

"Hum!" replied he doubtfully; "mebbe you're right, but I know Englishmen as knowed a right smart of things, and had bin to school for years, and yet they said ''ouse.'"

I found out afterwards that among the rougher classes of America, where everyone employs the aspirates correctly, but where they rarely see an educated Englishman, they believed no one from our island could use an "h" unless it were in the wrong place, and I was a constant source of surprise to them because I did.

Next day, with our strength reinforced by bear's meat, we commenced operations on the vein, and got out some specimens of quartz which were really rich, amply repaying hand-crushing. All the time we were

at work Mac was speculating as to what it would be worth to us.

"Millions, I reckon, Tom," said he, chuckling and wiping his face. "I shall go to San Francisco—I hevn't bin there for years—and have a bully time. Then I'll go east and see the old folks, and I'll settle—for a while, anyhow—in New York. Fifth Avenue's the tony place to live, ain't it? Then I'll live there; right alongside of old Vanderbilt: that would be good. Jest think of asking him in to have a game of poker; and Jay Gould too! No, I wouldn't have Jay: he's too mean by a long sight. I'm like the man in Wall Street, that told the photographer who was toting round picters of Jay's birth-place: 'These won't go a cent along here, my man; but if it was his tomb now, you'd do business.'"

"But, Mac," I asked, "how do you know there's all that in this lot? Are you sure it isn't a pocket?"

For I was getting learned in gold-mining terms, and knew a pocket was just a small spot where there would be no more than a certain amount: that is, the vein does not continue.

Mac scratched his head.

"Well, pard," he said slowly; "mebbe it is, and mebbe it isn't; but I never see a pocket like this. I

reckon it's a regular mine: that's what it is; but still, you may be right."

"And if I am, Mac, what about Fifth Avenue?"

He turned and laughed.

"Then I shall hev to put off Vanderbilt, and stay in San Francisco."

"How much do you reckon, Mac, will do that, eh? Five thousand dollars?"

"I've had many a jamberee on less, pard, but with five thousand dollars I could jest make things hum; I could paint the whole town redder than paint—red as blood. But I won't blow in the lot; no, I've got more sense, for I'm coming out again. But there, goldarn it, you've almost made me think we'll hev to do with ten thousand, and I tell you there's millions in it."

With that, he lifted up his pick and struck a tremendous blow at the loose quartz in front of him. But, instead of entering, the pick slid down a surface of rock behind, and the handle struck him in the stomach, throwing him off his balance. He fell, and rolled over and over, finally landing just where the bear had done with a tremendous splash. I ran down as hard as I could, and found him sitting up to his neck in the water, not making the least attempt to get out. He was very red in the face; his long wet hair was

hanging over his eyes, which he was winking to clear of the water, while a most solemn expression rendered him so absurd that it was with difficulty I refrained from laughter, afraid as I was that he had injured himself in the fall.

"Are you all right, Mac?" I inquired anxiously, reaching out my hand to him. He lifted his arm out of the water and waved me away.

"No, I'm not all right; I'm all wrong; it's all bust up. I've struck the bed rock."

"Has it broken any bones?" I cried.

He looked up and smiled curiously.

"Mebbe it broke the pick," he said.

"Hang the pick!" I said angrily. "Get out of the creek."

"Pardner, I beg you to let me stay awhile and cool. When I said I struck the bed-rock, you, if you weren't a 'tenderfoot' and an Englishman, would hev known I warn't alluding to what I fell on. I hev *not* broken any bones, but me and Vanderbilt 'll never sit at the same table. I struck the bed-rock, Tom, and our luck's out. You were right. It's only a pocket."

And he smiled a melancholy smile, and putting his chin into the water, drank. I sat down and laughed till I cried.

"You may laugh, Tom Ticehurst," said Mac quietly, but with a slight twinkle in his eyes, "but it ain't no laughing matter to lose millions. We've lost 'em just the same as if a bank broke; and I was as sure of that vein, considering the casing and everything about it, as if it was the First National Bank at Washington. Well, I shan't see Michigan yet. But it's getting cool here" (I should have thought so, considering the water ran from a glacier only two thousand feet above us); "so I'll get out."

He did so at last, and shook himself deliberately over me as I lay almost helpless with laughter at his feet. Then we went down to the camp, where he changed his clothes.

"You see, Tom," he murmured gently, as he fished out two pieces of clay pipe from his trousers pocket, "it never rains but it pours. I've lost a million or more, *and* a visit East, *and* a house in Fifth Avenue, *and* I've broken my clay pipe that I valued. It's hard pan!"

He cast the remains into the camp fire, and taking a plug of climax, he hacked off a piece as big as a ten-ounce nugget, which he put into his mouth as thoughtfully as though he were replacing a tooth.

"Hadn't we better go up, Mac," said I, "and see if it's as you say?"

" You kin, if you like, pard," said he ; " but I'll tell you what you'll see. There's a flat rock at a little angle just where I struck with the pick, and if you clear away all the quartz you'll find that same rock stops everything. Go and look ; but you can take my word it's so."

" Well," said I, " how much do you think we got altogether ? "

" What do you think ? " he replied.

I shrugged my shoulders.

" How should I know ? "

" Well, then, there's about seven thousand dollars, and that's all. Three and a half each of us ! " said he lugubriously. " Why, cuss it ! I shall get no further than Thomson Forks, or Victoria at the farthest. Oh, this is tough, very tough ! " and he groaned, half extinguishing the fire with a jet of tobacco-juice.

" Oh, come, Mac," said I, encouragingly, " that's not bad for a little over three months' work."

" Three months, man ! " said he. " Three months ! Haven't I been hunting that particular spot three years, and haven't I been prospectin' nigh on to seven without making more than board ? Oh, h—ll ! "

As I could see he was more than half joking, I began to laugh, and presently he joined in.

" Well, I reckon it ain't so bad, after all, and then

there's only half the summer gone; there's plenty of time to get a million yet."

My face fell. I knew it did, and Mac looked at me inquiringly.

"Don't you think," said I persuasively, "that we had better go back to the Forks now? Enough's as good as a feast."

"Ain't I bin telling you this last hour it ain't enough. I'm not a hog, but three and a half thousand dollars doesn't fill me up. What can I do with it?"

"Buy a farm," I interjected.

"And be a mossback?" said he contemptuously. "No, I reckon not. I'd rather be a saw-mill man and run the saw-dust barrow with a Chinee, or a railroader at a dollar and six bits a day. Hay-forks ain't my line."

"But the grub's nearly given out, Mac," said I.

"There's more down at the Columbia, or if not there, over at the Landing," he replied, obstinately. "What the thunder do you want down the country? You're safer up here, away from the drink."

"I don't drink," said I.

"You don't, eh? Well, I don't know what you call drinking, but I reckon you was nigh full the first time we met."

"The first time we parted, you mean, Mac. That was all your fault. And that's why I'm here."

Mac grinned.

"Well, you haven't done so badly out of it, Tom," said he.

"That's just what I said to you just now. But look here, old man: if you're set on staying, I'm with you till it's time to clear out on account of the snow. I won't desert you up here."

He held out his hand, which was about two sizes larger than mine (and that isn't the hand of a child by any means), saying—

"Put it there, pard; it's a bargain."

THE CAPTAIN'S WIFE.

THE CAPTAIN'S WIFE.

OF course, it isn't a likely thing to fall in with a vessel at sea with someone on board of her that a man knows. I know that, for the ocean's a big place. Who knows that better than an old seaman who's knocked about it from the North Cape to Cape Horn, from the Andaman Islands to the Farallones—who has been in most ports in the world—who's had Yellow Jack in the West Indies, and a knife in his ribs in the East? Still, one does sometimes come across a vessel that left the same port the same day. I remember coming near enough the *Renown* to make her out three times in one passage from Sandridge to London: once in a gale off the Horn, once when we were lying nearly becalmed on the Line, and later in the chops of the Channel. We were rubbing shoulders all the way home. So, if the sea is a big place, folk sometimes meet in it. London's a big place, but only a few weeks ago I fell across a man I last met in San Francisco. So there's no reason why a man shouldn't meet his best chum at sea, or his brother, or his wife maybe, if she's going somewhere in a vessel.

And that's what Will Falconer did when he was captain of the *Early Dawn*, bound for Rio.

I had sailed with Will long before he got his ticket. You see, he wasn't brought up by hand at sea; he didn't serve his time as a brass-bound poop ornament—one of those impudent young devils of "midshipmen," as they call them in Green's line. Will went to sea as a boy, and got knocked about till he was hard and strong enough to hit back. And he was able seaman with me in the *David Holmes*, of Bristol, for two voyages. But he was naturally a bright young chap, and I daresay it was through meeting the girl whom he afterwards married that he went to work at navigation.

A sea life's a poor life, any way you look at it; but it's better to be an officer than to be in the fo'c'sle, even if there was no more money hanging to the job. But seeing he took it into his head to want to marry before he was able to keep a wife, Will went to work, and got his ticket as second. And I sailed with him in the *Early Dawn*, of Liverpool—as A.B., of course; for though he used to worry me to try navigation, saying that I was better educated than half the officers afloat, I never could handle mathematics, and working a chronometer with all the figuring they want was sizes too large for me.

Then Will got his mate's ticket and married. It wasn't quite so foolish a match as most marriages made by seamen, for to his £8 a month she could add another five, left her by her father, who used to keep a marine-store at Bristol. Mary Barnes was her name then; and a bright, beautiful girl she was, too—slim and blue-eyed, with yellow hair. Will called it gold; and gold it was to him, for he loved her dearly, and was glad when it was my trick at the wheel in the middle watch, so that he could talk to someone who had seen her. I used to take the liberty sometimes of telling him not to be in a hurry to marry till he was captain; for as I had sailed with him before the mast, I knew him well enough to speak that way when we were alone.

However, marry her he did, and happy enough he was till it came time for him to go to sea again. But as it seemed till afterwards, he was in luck's way to marry Mary, for when he came home after that voyage, she met him all in a tremble with pleasure. He told me afterwards what she said, and it was: "Will, you need never go to sea any more if you don't want to."

You see, it was this way: her father's brother had been out in Monte Video for years, with very little heard of him, but at last he wrote home to Mary

herself, saying that as his wife was dead, and as he had no children, he wanted her to come out there and bring Will Falconer; for she had written, telling him of her marriage, like a dutiful niece. He was, so folks said, a rich man, and it was natural to take some notice of him.

Will at first made some objections, of course. He did not quite like giving up the sea when he had begun to rise; moreover, it was to some extent losing his independence to go to his wife's uncle. When he said that to me, I told him he was a fool, and asked where his independence was at sea, when he wasn't captain, and might not be for years, even if he had got his master's certificate by now. But at last the wish to be always with Mary conquered, and he agreed to go out to Monte Video with her as soon as he could settle on a ship. It wasn't so easy to get to South America in those days as it is now, for this was in the early sixties, and mail-steamers didn't run twice a week then, like mail-coaches. By the time they had sold up their furniture, however, he came across a vessel whose skipper he knew—the *Sharpness* she was, and a very decent craft of about seven hundred tons register, bound for Monte Video. Will thought as Captain Holt usually took his wife with him she would be company for Mary, so he settled to go in

the *Sharpness.* And just then the owners of the *Early Dawn* telegraphed for him to come at once, without saying what for. As there was plenty of time for him to go to Liverpool and back before the *Sharpness* sailed, he went off at once.

It appeared that the owners of the *Early Dawn* wanted him to go as skipper of her, for the captain was very ill, and likely to die. It doesn't often happen that a man is second officer, mate, and then skipper of the same vessel; but Messrs. White and Graves knew Falconer, and liked him well.

I suppose the offer was a tempting one to Will, for, as I said, he was ambitious, and was loth to give up the sea, with such promotion right before him. But he knew very well the owners didn't like their captains to have their wives on board, and in this I must say I think they were right. A woman is bad enough as a passenger; but when she is the captain's wife she is out of place, to my mind, and always interfering with something. Besides, it spoils a man's nerve to have his wife with him. So Will was in a quandary, and had two inclinations pulling different ways. But at last he wrote to Bristol, telling Mrs. Falconer about it, and saying that he had accepted the offer just for that voyage; for, as he told me, he knew that if he went back to Bristol he would not get to

Liverpool again. So this was the reason Mrs. Falconer went to Monte Video in the *Sharpness* just as we sailed for Rio Janeiro in the *Early Dawn*—for, of course, I went with Will Falconer. I was bo'sun that trip; and being bo'sun, by the way, was quite enough to show me I wasn't fit for an officer. It came precious hard to me to give orders.

It never occurred to me till long afterwards, but Will had been changing very much since I first sailed with him. In those days he was rather a solemn kind of a young man, never doing much in the way of larking, and it took a good yarn to make him laugh. But as he rose in the service he got merrier and merrier, and now as captain, and a married man, he was just as lively as a cricket, and as light as dawn in the tropics. I suppose it was that he had got what he wanted, and was just happy about it. Some men never get happy, however much success they grab hold of; they always want more. But Will Falconer wasn't that sort; and now, as skipper of the *Early Dawn*, all the men forward said he was just the finest captain they had ever sailed with. He didn't seem to know the meaning of the word "haze"; and yet, for all that, the work was done as readily for him as if he had been that swab of an American captain of the *Gatherer*, who shot a man

off the main-yard and blinded a boy, and got eighteen months "hard" in the San Francisco Penitentiary.

In a way, I suppose command came as easy to him as it came hard to me. Responsibility didn't seem to weigh on him at all. Indeed, at times I thought he was reckless, for he would carry on in a gale of wind as if he was a Scotsman. When he reefed topsails, you might be sure it was blowing. But, for the matter of that, we had a very fair passage as far as the north-east Trades, barring one gale on the edge of the Bay. But when we picked up the Trades they were very light, and we fairly drifted down to the Line. We were thirty-five days out from Liverpool when we were in one degree North latitude, and there we lay for nearly a week. All this time the easiest-tempered man on board was the skipper. As a rule they mind it most, though it tries everyone; but I suppose Will Falconer looked on this trip almost as a pleasure business. After all, it was only to oblige the owners, and probably he would never make another voyage, having a rich uncle under his lee. But calms I don't like: they try all the gear just as they do one's temper, and strain the rigging just when it's slackest if there is the least bit of a swell. And as I was bo'sun, of course I was in a

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kind of way responsible. At least, that's how I took it.

One night (we had then been becalmed four days) the skipper came to me as I stood under the break of the poop, for I think he somehow missed the yarns we used to have when I was able seaman and took my trick at the wheel.

"What do you think, Harry? Is it going to last long?"

"Why, sir," said I, for I was always most respectful, "it may last for ever, by the look of it."

"Ay, and by the look of the barometer," said he.

"Whereabouts d'ye think the *Sharpness* will be by this time?" he asked, after a minute or so.

"She may be anywhere, sir," was my answer. And what other answer could I make? For the *Sharpness* might have got a good slant of wind, and crossed the Line flying, and be well into the south-east Trades by this time. It isn't always the fastest vessel makes the fastest passage.

"And she may be right close here," said the captain.

"She may, sir," said I; and of course she might. But what was the use of asking anyone? it certainly was no good asking me.

But, for all that, Will Falconer's talking about the

vessel in which his wife was, set me thinking, as, I suppose, he had been. It was curious to fancy that his wife might be a few miles off, rolling gently in the *Sharpness* as we were in the *Early Dawn*, with a clear sky overhead and a windless sea beneath. Each morning after that I used to take a look round; but as we were rather west of the usual longitude vessels bound like ourselves cross the Line in, I never saw anything. And all this time we were slowly drifting to the southward. Sometimes for half an hour or so we caught a catspaw of wind, and almost got steerage way. But on the eighth day it was the deadest calm of all; and the heat was almost too much to stand. To touch iron was little worse than touching wood, the pitch almost boiled out of the deck; the toughest-footed seaman in the crowd was glad to put shoes on, for the deck was like the top of an oven. And now there was no swell, the canvas ceased to flap, and the yards were as still as if we were in dock; if a parral did creak every now and again, the sound was as startling as a pistol-shot. For in that heat it was little work we did; and besides, this was Sunday.

Now, I don't know what it was that sent me there—perhaps it was the notion that it might be cooler up there—but at any rate I crawled up into the maintop,

and sat in the shadow of the mast. I suppose I fell asleep, for presently I found the sun full on my face as we boxed the compass in that dead calm. I looked out on the port beam, and in the smooth burning sea I fancied I saw a white speck. As I looked the vessel swung slowly round, and the clew of the lower topsail hid it from view. I clambered up the topmast rigging, and got on the lower topsail yard, and then, sure enough, I saw that speck again. And now it was more than a speck. It might be a boat. It was a boat surely. I hailed the deck.

"On deck there!"

Instantly there was a buzz below, and some of the men came out of the shadow. Mr. Brown, the second officer, answered me.

"What is it, Jenkins?"

"Well, sir," said I, "I'm not rightly sure, but I think I see a white painted boat somewhere about four points on the port bow. If you would bring your glass, sir."

And in two minutes he was beside me on the yard.

"Can you see it now?"

I pointed. As we were slowly swinging, the object I had seen was just being obscured by the leach of the foretopsail; so Mr. Brown went out on the yard and took a look at it.

"You are right, Jenkins; it is a boat."

"Anybody in it, sir?" I asked eagerly, for I was thinking what it must be to be in a boat under that sun. And if anyone *was* in it, how long had he been there?

"I think not. I am pretty sure it is empty. But I will tell Captain Falconer."

With that, we both went down on deck, and as he went aft into the saloon I went forward, and was just going up the fore-rigging when it occurred to me that I might just as well send someone else, and meanwhile see a boat clear for lowering, in case the skipper wanted to overhaul the castaway. So I sent one of the men aloft to keep it in sight, and with the rest of the watch cleared away the gig.

The captain came out on deck yawning, for he had been asleep; but he soon brightened up.

"A boat, eh?" said he. "Anyone in it, Mr. Brown?"

"I think not, sir."

"How far is it away?"

Brown turned to me.

"About four miles," said he.

"Nearer five, sir," said I.

"Very well," said the captain; "get the boat over the side and take a look at her, at any rate."

We lowered away the boat, and the second officer was just about to get into her when the skipper stopped him.

"Stay, Mr. Brown. On my soul I think I'll go myself. I am fairly dying for something to do."

And he laid hold of the davit ropes and went down. I was just going to follow him when it occurred to me that we ought to have water. We should want it ourselves, at any rate, before that pull was done; and, besides, it was just possible that there might be someone in that boat.

"Stay one moment, sir. Here, Dick, run to the cask, and fill the little breaker."

Dick, the boy, was back in a moment or two.

"If you please, sir, I can't find the breaker, but here's the can."

This held about a gallon and a half. I handed it down, and followed it myself.

There were four of us pulling, and the captain steering. Will Falconer seemed quite happy at getting away from the deadly dulness of the calm, and laughed, in spite of the heat. Certainly, he was not pulling.

"Well, Jenkins," said he, "this is quite an expedition to liven you up. I know it makes you unhappy to hear the gear rattling in a calm."

"Why, yes, sir, of course it does. I like to be doing something and going somewhere."

"So do I as a rule, Jenkins, but I don't feel this trip in so much of a hurry. If the old *Sharpness* were able to sail two feet for our one I would have had you wetting the sails before this."

I daresay there was some truth in what he said, but, for all that, he was glad to be doing something. Once I saw a captain put a boat over the side in a calm to get back a rotten old sheepskin which the cook let fall overboard. He was dead on doing something, that skipper.

Before we had pulled a mile from the *Early Dawn* those who were pulling with me seemed to find it almost too hot. For the sea was like glass, and the sun overhead shone like red-hot brass, and as the water went away from the oars it seemed sluggish and oily, and our wake was like oil too. Presently the bowman begged for a drink, and the captain easied her and passed the big can forward. The other two men took a drink.

"Steady, Thomson," said I to the man nearest me; "don't swallow the lot. We have a long way to go yet."

And I didn't drink myself; nor, for that matter, did the captain.

For the first mile or rather more the skipper owned he could not see the boat we had come after, but after that he caught sight of her.

"Yes," said he, "she's painted white, or else she's turned white with time. I daresay she's been doddering round these latitudes for half a century."

And then he took a drink himself. If he hadn't done so I would have begged him not to pass the can forward, for I couldn't help thinking that after all someone might want it worse than any one of us. But as he passed it himself, I could not offer to stop him. When it came to the bowman's turn, there was very little left in it, so I shouted out—

"Easy with it, young fellow; I haven't had a drink yet."

But though he did go easy as far as the amount he drank went, it wasn't his fault, for it was almost empty when he got it; so the young beggar finished it out.

By this time the *Early Dawn* began to look very small—so small that we seemed all by ourselves, as you do at sea in a small boat. But as I looked over my shoulder I saw the boat within a cable's length—say, about a hundred fathoms. In a few moments the skipper cried out—

"Way enough!"

And with his steering we shot right up alongside, and then we saw—we saw something which turned me sick—ay, and white too, though I am brown.

There were women in that boat—two of them—and two men; and of the four, one woman was alive and one man. One woman was lying on her back dead; the other was turned over on her face, but I saw her fingers move with a curious motion, as if they alone of all her parched body were alive. One man lay in the bows, staring at us horribly. He opened his black mouth, and lifting his hand slowly, pointed to it. And the look in his eyes!—oh, the look in his eyes! He was looking out of hell for heaven's water.

But the captain. He sat where he was for a moment, and when I turned round to get the can I stopped. He was a curious green colour, and his lips were bloodless: he stared into the boat. And I saw where he looked—at what he was looking. He was looking at the hair of the living woman, whose face was hidden. It was a bright, bright yellow! But the ends were grey with the soaking of brine.

Falconer tried to move, and could not. He leant over, still seated, and touched the long hair, and he spoke—

"Golden hair! Oh, Mary!"

And with that he clambered over into the boat and turned the woman over. He knew her, but I should never have known her. For it was his wife, the golden-haired woman he loved. I heard a man's scream then—the scream which is not caused by pain, and he opened and shut his raised hand to me. I knew what he wanted : the can. It was in my hand. And I cursed aloud as I shook it, for I heard no sound. It was empty.

But he would not believe it. He took it and put it to this woman's cracked lips. Perhaps one drop moistened them ; but no more than one drop. And he caught her in his arms and lifted her into the boat.

"Back, back to the ship!" and his voice was dreadfully unnatural, so much so that the men made no motion. I caught the living man up, and stepped into our boat with him. He was as light as a child. I laid him down, and, taking my oar, stove out a bottom board of that pestilent boat—for I didn't like to leave the dead to rot under the sun—and as I did so I saw a little patch of burnt paint on the boat's gunnel. And then we pulled back as hard as we could pull; and there sat the captain, with his wife in his arms. Under my feet was the man, and he moaned a little, and his finger was ever at his

mouth. He looked up once or twice, but I saw him shudder at last. He died before we were half-way back.

Ah! there was no need to tell us to pull: the boat tore through the water. I had been thirsty before, but now, with these two before me, I was in no need of water. Thirst! what was my thirst to this? And all the time the captain moaned and muttered, and laid his dry lips to the woman's dry lips, and he rocked himself to and fro. Presently he looked up, and I saw him speak a word.

"A knife!"

I gave him mine, and he cut his arm and laid it against his wife's lips. He was ready to give her his blood. But she did not drink; she moaned a little, and was still. And then the man behind me fainted. I grasped his oar, and the captain laid his wife down, and took mine, as he covered her face from the sun with his jacket. We pulled for life—for this life under the bitter burning sun that had done this thing, and was like hell above us.

As we pulled the captain's hat fell off. I could not speak. He did not put it on, but pulled harder than ever. I felt the sinews of my wrist giving out: I heard the man behind me groan. But we pulled until we came within a hundred yards of our vessel,

and then the captain threw up his hands, dropped his oar, and fell insensible, with his head upon his wife's golden hair, which was spread upon the bottom of the boat. The sun had struck him down as well as the woman. But it killed him quickly.

With three oars we pulled the rest of the distance. But when we took Mrs. Falconer on board she was dead, and Captain Falconer died raving at sundown, without recovering his senses. I made the shrouds for them and for the man as well; and we buried them all by moonlight in the middle watch. No one ever learnt the fate of the *Sharpness;* not one of her crew was ever heard of afterwards. But that little patch of burnt wood on the side of the boat told the story of "Fire."

SAM JACKSON'S SNAKE.

SAM JACKSON'S SNAKE.

I SHALL call our town Snyder, and if anybody hunts up a place of that name anywhere in North-west Texas, I don't mind, for I mean somewhere else.

I was loafing in Snyder. I may just as well be honest about it as not, for I always am idle when I get the chance, and I got a very good chance that hot summer in Texas. I held the side-walk down for about three months, on and off, and sat outside the general store, where they sold pants and sugar and such-like things, chewing tobacco and killing flies, wondering whether it was as hot anywhere else, or hotter, as my mother told me when I got into trouble.

Yet I confess it was dull in that town, and if it hadn't happened that I was always good at sleeping, I might have hunted up something to do. I used to lie with my head on a mat of sugar in the shade of the verandah, and blink like an owl at the hot sunshine across the road—across the street, that is; for there were two houses on the north side of it, and those, with three on the shady side, made up our

town. It wasn't very big, and I have seen bigger, such as Fort Worth and Dallas.

Snyder wasn't very exciting, either. All that three months not a single man was killed—killed outright, that is—while in a place called Salt Springs, only bigger by one house, there were three done up in the time. We used to think it hard on the reputation of our county, for there wasn't a man in it that Ben Thompson would have had any real respect for. And everybody knows that Ben Thompson killed more men than he could count in a hurry. We had only one excitement, and that was telling about our adventures. Bill Hopkins (he kept the store) and I soon got tired of each other, for he had a way of looking as if he didn't believe what I told him ; and then neither of us was much good at invention, and a man can use up all that has really happened to him in a week, if he hasn't anything else to do, and stays sober enough to talk, so you bet we were glad when old Sam Jackson used to come.

As I lay on that mat of sugar (there was a dent in it that just fitted my head), I could see the road that ran west, and whenever anybody came along, I would go out and ask him in to take a drink. That pleased Bill, and it did me good, because Bill was so dull. In this way I sometimes got hold of a man that

could talk; or, if he would listen, I could reel off all my stale old yarns as if they had happened yesterday. But Sam Jackson was the boy I liked, and when I got to know him, and saw him loping in on his little buckskin pony, I used to get up and shout till I made a whirlwind in the street, and the inhabitants couldn't see themselves for dust. For when Sam came, he came to stay and to talk.

He was as brown as a greaser, as hard as a wire fence, and just about twice as tall as his pony. He wore a cow hat, with a four-inch brim, that was old and flapped in his eyes, till he cut slits on the outer edge and ran a piece of string through them. That made it stiff. He hardly ever wore a coat, but his shirt was red when it was washed—at least, he said so—and his boots were brown, as brown as his toes. He had one suspender, and as there wasn't a button on the front of his pants, he bunched up a piece of the stuff and hung the thing with a bent nail. He had a belt and a pistol, but he hardly ever shot anybody.

He was a very sociable kind of chap, and we were soon friendly, for I liked to hear him talk, and said so. For he could tell a yarn with more ornament to it, and more variegation, than any man I ever saw, and he was bound to end up well, even if he didn't

know how he was going to lie when he began. Don't I remember the first time I heard him! I hadn't been in Snyder more than a week, and I was inside the store chewing candy and tobacco, turn and turn about, when Bill sings out—

"Here's ole Jackson a-coming!"

"Who's he?" said I, slowly, for I own to not feeling right well. Candy and tobacco don't mix.

"He's a cattleman: least, he owns four cows and a steer, and that's what he calls himself. But he's the daisy to talk. And there's Tom Johnson with him."

I knew Tom; he was a cowboy, the same as myself, and we worked on the round up two years together. In five minutes old Jackson came in, and Tom with him. I said "Howdy," and Tom he said "Howdy," and he gave me his plug of climax. I hacked a bit off, and then turned to hear the old man talk. But first one and then another came in from over the way, and it was quite a while before we were all fixed with liquor and kegs to sit on, and I could get the hang of what he was saying; but when I did, I heard he was on snakes.

"Yes, sir," said he, "we killed a rattler just now, Tom and me; at least, I see him, and Tom—he killed him. Big? No, he warn't so big, 'bout as thick 's my wrist. But I have killed big ones. There

ain't a man in Texas what has killed bigger. But there now, I don't go much on killin' snakes. Some folks say, 'Kill him; mebbe he'll kill you.' I say if a man's got to die by a snake, die he will. If he killed every snake in North America, he'd run up agin an imported one.

"I like to keep a pet snake, and I had one once. Lordy, you should hev seen him! Now, some folks lies about snakes and Injuns. I've known men as was commonly truthful as couldn't help but lie about such. But I'm tellin' you the truth about my snake. Hank Williams I called him, because he bit an old pardner of mine of that name, and he died; so I named the rattler after him, just to keep his memory fresh and green.

"What size was he? Waal, now, I don't want to stretch it, but he was nigh on to seven foot. But big as he was, he never took no advantage of it. He'd follow me just 's if he was a dog; and when I called 'Hank,' you'd see him comin' just on the bulge with excitement. He was playful too, and fond of fun, for he'd lie round lookin' for somebody fresh as didn't know him, and then he'd spring his rattles. I dessay you chaps wouldn't believe it if I said he'd laugh, but I tell you the way he opened his mouth, till it was like the end of a drain-pipe, looked as if he was

laughing. I believe he did. But he never played no tricks off on me; only he used to rattle soft, just for pleasure, more like a cat a-purrin' than anything else, when I took notice of him. And my actin' kind to him brought out his intelligence wonderful. Talk of your dogs and elephants, Hank would just lay over a town-full of dogs for cunning. And helpful he was, too. One day I mind I was wheelin' a barrer of dirt, and becos my wrist was strained in a fight I'd hed, I passed a piece of rope over my shoulders on to both handles, and it broke. When I knotted it the dod-rotted stuff broke again, and I cussed a blue streak. But Hank, who was a-bowlin' along beside me, come up and took a look at the barrer, and when he see the rope, he kind of shook his head, and clumb up on my shoulders so that both ends of him hung down. I wondered what he was after, but I soon found out. He jest coiled his tail round one handle, and his neck round the other, and give that barrer a hist that came nigh capsizin' it.

"Oh, but he was a daisy! He would have yanked the bun at any snake-show in the univarse. And so considerate he was. Boys, now it's the truth I'm telling you. So I tell you he *was* careful with me. Some folks used to say keepin' a rattler was like playin' with dynamite; but then they didn't know

Hank. I did, and that made all the difference. If he'd bin your common ordinary careless snake, that don't think before he bites, I wouldn't hev hed him round. But he warn't. He knew he was dangerous; he knew that better than folks could tell him. When he come to bed with me of a night, blarm me if he wouldn't take his rattles off first! What's that you say, Tom? I say yes, he did, he took his rattles off. That was so as to keep from wakin' me. And mor'n that, he'd take his two big teeth out, just as careful as if they was an old lady's with gold fixin's, and he'd stow 'em away in a cigar-case I put handy for him. But that, mind you, was only when we was in a safe place. If there was any Injuns round, any of them goldarned Apaches, we used to keep watch and watch, turn and turn about, and he'd wake me when my turn come jest as reg'lar as if he'd hed the time on him. And he was better than any dog. He'd smell an Apache just as far as I would an old dog skunk.

"That reminds me what happened to him once. It was all the fault of a blamed ole skunk as came round my tent in Tom Green county, and I tell you he made my coat smell worse than if he'd lived in it with his wife and family. I had a cold or suthin', so at first I didn't notice it, and I mind that Hank was

mighty sleepy that mornin', becos it was blowin' a norther cold enough to make ice cream without freezin'; and so, just to let him have his proper rest out while I rolled up my blanket, I took him up in a coil, the way he was lyin', like a lariat done up neat, and I put him on my coat where the doggoned ole skunk had bin. And when I turned round agin he was sicker'n a dog, and he looked the worst disgusted snake you ever see. He was green, fairly green, instead of his nat'ral brown, and cryin' real tears, and retchin' as if he was sea-sick or had been chewin' arsenic. He looked sideways on me, I tell you, and it took more persuasion than most anyone would waste on a dumb animal—though it warn't wasted on him—to make him believe I hedn't been foolin' him. I wouldn't play no sech mis'rable trick even on a copperhead, let alone a snake as was named Hank.

"I hed to carry him on horseback for days after, hanging on the horn of the saddle, along with my lariat, and I nearly scared a tenderfoot to death with him. You see, I forgot about Hank, and of course I thought he was jest foolin' round waiting for me, and when I asked this galoot to bring my lariat he laid hands on Hank. Back he come as white as new cotton, tremblin' as if he'd seen Ole Scratch, and when he got his breath he begun to cuss, threatenin'

to kill the ole rattler, jest 's if it was Hank's fault that he was ill becos he could not stand the smell of a skunk. I told him if he jest so much as looked cross at my snake I'd make him fuller of holes than any prairie dog town in South-West Texas, and he jest nat'rally took water. For you bet I had the deadwood on him, the mean cuss, to threaten a poor sick snake that had the sense to let him off with a scare. Why, if Hank had been real mean—and bein' sick brings the meanness out in most anything, snake, or steer, or man—he would have completely filled him up with pisin, for his fangs was half as long as a bowie-knife, and had holes in 'em like a terbacker pipe for the pisin to run in.

"But then Hank got jest like me; I never did kill a man, and I never will, unless I thought he desarved it, or unless he was an Apache Indian. But I did want to kill an innocent man, jest fer spite, when he died. Yes, poor Hank died at last. You see, I took him north for a spell, on business—my business, that is—and when the snow flew, bein' used to a warm climate (he was raised near San Antone—at least, that's where I got him), the cold disagreed with him. He took to lyin' in bed all day, where I'd take him milk in a saucer. And I nearly got froze tryin' to catch mice for him. But there, I might as

well have offered him a hull rabbit, for when I showed him a mouse he took no more interest in it than nothin', and turned away from his nat'ral vittles just like a man as is sick with chills—kind of weary. And he grew thin, so as you could a'most count his ribs—I forget how many he had; nigh on to a hundred, I think—and his cheeks fell in. He must have been in a consumption or a decline. I couldn't get no doctor to come nigh him twice, and somehow poor old Hank didn't have no confidence in me; I suppose becos I was so troubled that I couldn't show as if I knew every mortal thing in the univarse, as doctors do. One darned doc wanted to kill him, and put him in a bottle with spirits. He said he was jest the very finest snake he had ever seen. I was too mad to tell him that he ought to hev seen Hank in his palmy days, when he was fat. That night he died.

"I tell you, I remember that night well. I had been sittin' by the bed, and I fell asleep; but Hank, he rattled (like a sick man ringin' a bell), and I woke up sudden to find him jest goin' off. But he was a clever snake, and remembered I had allers been good to him, and so he whipped his tail round, unhitched his rattles, and put 'em on my knee, 's if they was a lock of hair for me to remember him by. But then

snakes is mostly bald, and he give me all he had, the rattles he had been so proud and careful of—eighteen they was, and all sound. And then he coiled up and died. I never could keep no other snakes after Hank. There may be prettier sarpents, there air bigger sarpents, but a kinder, cunninger, better-dispositioned snake than Hank never lived, and never will live—no, not from El Paso to Seattle, nor from San Diego to Galveston. Gimme another Bourbon, Bill, for I'm dry, mighty dry!"

Bill handed Jackson his drink in silence, and nobody said a word. Tom was looking at me, but I kept my eyes on a cigar stump on the floor, for I wasn't certain that Sam was speaking the truth, and so I was afraid of laughing until somebody made a joke. I said to myself, "Some fellows lie about snakes and Injuns, but Sam Jackson doesn't." Snyder did not seem quite so dull.

FRANCKE AND PARTY.

FRANCKE AND PARTY.

THE fact of the matter is that Francke himself was very much more lucky than many men have been who went trading round the coasts of New Guinea, or in the Louisiades, or the island groups to the north-east of the Louisiades. For these New Guinea natives, fine fellows though they are physically, are decidedly on the treacherous side, and are as cunning as snakes; besides being given occasionally to cannibalism. They are not ashamed of their taste for human flesh, but will acknowledge it; at least, many of them will. So I say Francke, the big German, was on the whole lucky; certainly, he was luckier than Captain Jones, of the schooner *Emu*, who went trading and pearl-fishing in the Conflict group, and never came back.

If I tell you shortly how that happened, you will begin to see what kind of people these natives are, and how one must treat them. Yet it certainly was to some extent Jones's own fault that he got speared, for he was a very mean man, and took as few whites with him as possible, in order to save money, trusting to his being able to get what native help he wanted in

the fishing. So beyond his diver, George Thomson, and two more seamen, and a boy, he had no one on whom to rely if any trouble arose, or if, in the midst of apparent peace, the natives made any attack on him. But when this did happen, it was poor George Thomson who was most to be pitied, for he was down below in five fathoms of water in his diver's suit; and when a man has such gear about him, he is at anyone's mercy, wherever he may be.

The morning the tragedy of the *Emu* schooner took place everything had been going very well indeed. Some of the natives came out in their canoes, bringing wood and water, for which Jones paid with a knife and some cotton-stuff—not too much of it, you may be sure; but the men who took his payment made no quarrel over the amount. In fact, they only looked upon what they got as samples, and they were quite wise enough not to rouse anyone's suspicions by showing anger. So they laughed and chattered, and one canoe stayed on the port side, where the two seamen were tending the air-pumps for Thomson, and the other drifted off, and presently came round to the starboard side. The day was very bright and calm; there was hardly a breath of air blowing, and the sea was like glass. If it had not been for the heavy shadow of the schooner and the air bubbles coming

up from the man down below, one might have almost seen him moving about among the pearl oysters.

But suddenly this calm changed. If the seamen, busy pumping, had only taken good notice of all the natives were doing, they might have seen two of them bending over the side of their canoe farthest from the schooner's side. They were unlashing their spears, which they often carry in this way when they mean treachery and wish to inspire confidence by making folk believe they have no weapons. They were all talking in their own tongue, which is called Motu, a language very few white men know, and presently they sheered close up alongside.

Suddenly from the canoe on the starboard came two spears. Both the seamen fell, and the next moment ten natives were on the deck. Jones, who had gone aft, turned round and drew his revolver. But he was too late; three spears entered his body at the same moment. The boy was in the hands of a big native, who made him a prisoner. The others turned their attention to Thomson, the diver. At the very moment of their coming on board, one of the men divided the pipes of the air-pump with his tomahawk, not two seconds after the two men fell who had been pumping. Of course poor Thomson must

have noticed at once the ceasing of the vibration of the pump ; and as sound travels well under water, he must have heard the heavy fall of the men's bodies, and the shouts of the natives the moment after. He threw off the weights which divers carry on their backs and breasts, and rose instantly to the surface. To stay down was to die of suffocation ; to come up was equally death, for those who had murdered the schooner's crew threw spears at him as he floated high out of the water. One spear struck the brass of his heavy gorget and glanced off, but the next one went through and through him. He drifted away in the current, which here runs at about a knot an hour, and letting him go, the natives turned to plundering the schooner, which they set fire to at last. He sank in a very few minutes, for the water poured into his suit through the spear-holes.

Judging only from this incident, which is well known in New Guinea and Queensland, one would have thought that men engaged in trading about these coasts would show such caution as to render the likelihood of a repetition of similar disasters almost impossible. Still, it seems that the self-confidence of the white races is not to be shaken : that the Germans and English, who at present share New Guinea with the natives, are alike rash and ad-

venturous. And Francke was a German, a fine big fellow, with yellow hair and the strength of a giant, who came from Frankfort-on-Main.

He had made a few hundred pounds on some of the Queensland diggings, and not being of the order of men who only earn money to spend it again for the support of sellers of drink, determined to try the even newer country of New Guinea, which to many Australians represents the fabulous El Dorado. It is near, and yet unknown ; it is tropical, rich, fertile ; on its coasts are pearls, on its lowlands cocoa-nut groves, up its rivers alluvial gold, in its far blue mountains all strange wild possibilities. So Francke hunted round Cooktown for mates, and found two Englishmen, Curtis and Gray, who both possessed a little money and much courage. The cutter *Cecilia* was lying in the river, and could be had at a fair price. So Francke and his party bought her, fitted her out with beads, coloured calicoes, scrap iron, knives, but chiefly tobacco—for most of the natives have now learnt to smoke—and sailed for New Guinea.

They brought up in Orangery Bay, on the south coast, and began to get copra, or dried cocoa-nut for making cocoa-nut oil, on board. The natives were easy enough to deal with ; the copra came down in canoe-loads. But on the third day the tragedy of the

schooner *Emu* found its parallel in the tragedy of the cutter *Cecilia*.

The same good-nature of the natives, the same trick of hidden weapons, the same sudden treacherous assault. Curtis and Gray were both speared and killed instantly, and as Francke rushed to their assistance he was speared through the arm, and struck on the back of the head with a tomahawk. He stumbled, fell over the body of a native whom he had shot, and rolled overboard. The cutter was in the hands of the natives. But Francke was not killed.

On falling into the water he sank, but rose again. Even in his insensibility he must have made some efforts to keep up, for presently he found himself floating about fifty yards from the *Cecilia*. The tomahawk had not struck him fairly; it had only made a bad scalp wound and glanced off. But in his right forearm was a spear. Now, most of the New Guinea native spears are made with a long row of barbs for about two feet on each side of the head, which is pointed with hardened bamboo, or in some places with a kind of obsidian. Unfortunately for Francke, the barbs had not gone clean through his forearm; they were half on one side and half on the other. It was impossible to swim with the spear

hanging to him. Though the agony was horrible, he grasped the shaft in his left hand, thrust the rest of the barbs through the wound, and with a wrench, which was ghastly torture to the torn flesh, he snapped the wood, and drew the weapon out. The water stopped the bleeding, for the main artery of the arm had not been severed. He paddled slowly towards the land, which was more than a mile and a half distant.

As the wretched man swam on towards the shore, he wondered if it would not be best to let himself drown at once. Could he reach the land? And if he could, what then? Wounded, helpless, worn-out, in a land of fierce enemies, of treacherous and blood-thirsty wretches, who were not averse from cannibalism: what could he do? But the answer to his arguments was given by his strength, wounded as he was. Life was very strong in him; he did not want to die; and arguing against the voice of Nature is vain in any man who has not been robbed of half himself in civilisation.

So he swam onwards towards the shore, though sometimes he sank so deep in the water that the blue hills of the far distance were all he could see. In his struggle he wished that he had really been killed. It would have been all over long before if he had not

come to himself—he would have been at rest. Why did the natives not come his way even then and see him? Another spear-thrust, and then oblivion!

So for hours, as it seemed, the struggle went on. At times he turned over and floated. Again he swam landward, using his left arm and his legs—for his wounded arm was useless. And at last he touched the ground. He had been swimming with his eyes closed, or he had gone half-blind, but suddenly he felt the bottom. He came into a mangrove swamp that edged the dry land. For a long time he rested on a root. Then he struggled through the mud, stumbling, toiling, falling, rising again, half-choked with the rotting vegetable refuse, which smelt so foully in the thick steaming heat of the shadowy swamp. He came out upon dry land, covered and caked with mud, more like a wild beast than a man. He staggered, looked for some sheltered spot, saw none, made a few steps onward, and fell in a heap under a tree. He lay insensible where he fell.

How long his unconsciousness lasted Francke never knew. It might have been only a few hours; it might have been more than a whole day. He had reached the shore early in the afternoon; when he woke to the bitter fact that he was still living, it was getting on towards sundown. What brought him to

then was a sharp stinging pain in the muscles of his back. As he rose up into a sitting posture he saw a young native boy running off into the brush as hard as he could tear. The little demon had been trying the point of his spear on a dead man, as he thought, and the dead had come to life. Francke leant up against the trunk of the tree under which he had been lying: he thought of trying to hide himself; for it was certain that some of the natives would come to find him. Yet, what good was it? He was too weak to go far. Very little search would be needed to unearth him even in the thickest scrub there. He might just as well wait for death in the open ground where he was.

Presently he saw two women coming from the opposite direction to that taken by the boy who had wounded him last. He thought it just possible they might be more merciful than the men; they might give him something to drink, at any rate, and drink, water, water, seemed more desirable than life itself. He tried to speak, but could not. As he moved, however, one of the women saw him, and made a startled exclamation. He did not move again, and they stood looking at him, evidently not knowing whether to run or come towards him. He lifted up his hand and pointed at his mouth. They seemed to

understand the gesture, and approached him more nearly. They could see he was utterly helpless, and some little pity was in them. They went away, and returned with water in a big leaf folded into a cup.

The elder woman came timidly to him, holding it out, but Francke could not even lift his arm to take it. She grew more courageous, and put it to his parched and cracking lips. It was new life to him, and seemed to run through all his veins, putting out the fire of fever and that wild desire born of thirst which is the most horrible torment that can afflict a man. And then the boy who had run off came back with three or four men, some of whom carried spears, while one had a curious weapon such as Francke had never seen. It was like a very large racket-bat without the stretched catgut.

The women joined the newcomers, and there was an excited talk among them. It was evident that there were two sides to the question. Some wanted to spear him at once; the women were inclined to mercy. And mercy of a sort gained the day. Francke soon found out what the racket-bat meant, for the wielder of it approached him quickly and put it over his head. The handle of this strange weapon was prolonged in a sharp point some four or five inches into the open oval which went round the

German's neck, and a sharp prick with this urged him on to his feet. He found out afterwards that it was an instrument used for taking prisoners. Once over a man's head, the point could be used merely as a goad, or, in cases of resistance, as a dagger.

He was taken in this way to their village, which was nearly half a mile distant, and thrown into an empty hut. They evidently had no fear of his escaping; his weakness and his wounds would prevent that. They gave him plenty of their own food, and though Francke had more than a suspicion that this feeding was only a preliminary to some future feast in which he would figure as chief dish, he ate, and, growing stronger, began to hope that some path might open for him to get away.

The savage who had been the leader in the attack on the *Cecilia* was the biggest man in the tribe, and a very truculent-looking fellow to boot. Sometimes he came down to Francke's hut-prison and talked to him in the native language, of which the German understood not a word. But it was quite certain that he was not being told comforting things. The greatest prize taken from the *Cecilia* was Francke's own double-barrelled gun, and this had fallen to the leader. The cartridges were expended in a kind of *feu de joie* by the gun's new owner, who went about

firing in the air until they were all done. Francke was much afraid that he would furnish a target for one of them, and was not a little relieved when the cessation of the reports gave evidence of the end of the cartridges.

Next day he found the gun lying outside this man's hut, for he was allowed to walk about the village without much hindrance. Presently he ran across a full cartridge which had fallen into some water and swelled too much to enter the breech. He picked it up, and waiting till he was unobserved, took the gun into his own hut. Here he managed, by tearing away some of the paper on the cartridge, to load it, and he then laid it by, thinking if the worst came to the worst he could at least kill one of the natives before he died himself. But the next afternoon the savage owner of the gun came and took it away. Some of the boys must have seen it in Francke's hut when he was out. A few minutes afterwards there was a muffled report, and the native came staggering out of his hut with his hands clasped to his side. He fell down, and in a few moments was dead. Francke had killed him, after all.

There was a great wailing over the death of this brute, but no one thought of attributing his sudden end to the prisoner. For one thing, most of the men

were very busy trading with a Chinaman named Ah Sing, who had a *bêche-de-mer* fishing station over at Cloudy Bay, and troubled very little about the captive. It was through this Chinaman that he at last got away.

Ah Sing knew the natives' language, and was quite friendly with them; but when he learnt that they had a white man a prisoner, he began to do his best to have him set free. A Chinaman is naturally very politic, and a trading Chinaman especially so. Here was a chance of saving a German, and so obliging the Germans; of taking his rescued man to the English at Dinner Island, and so getting credit with the English; and of gaining some power over the natives by pretending he was doing it out of pure good-feeling towards them. He called them together, and explained that the English man-of-war schooner the *Harrier* was hunting up this very man, and if they did him any harm they would all be killed and their village destroyed. It would be greatly to their advantage to let him take the prisoner away. He argued and explained the matter at full length, until the natives were only too glad to let Francke go, believing if they did what Ah Sing wanted he would save them from any evil consequences of their act of piracy.

When Ah Sing sailed he took Francke with him, and landed him at the English coaling station on Dinner Island. When the German steamer *Samoa* came from Finch Haven, bound to Cooktown, she took him on board. He was then rapidly recovering his strength, but the horrible experiences he had gone through affected him at times very strangely. His mild and equable temper was now altered; he was liable to violent outbursts of rage; at times he seemed out of his mind. But few men could go through so much without suffering for it, both in mind and body.

THE END.

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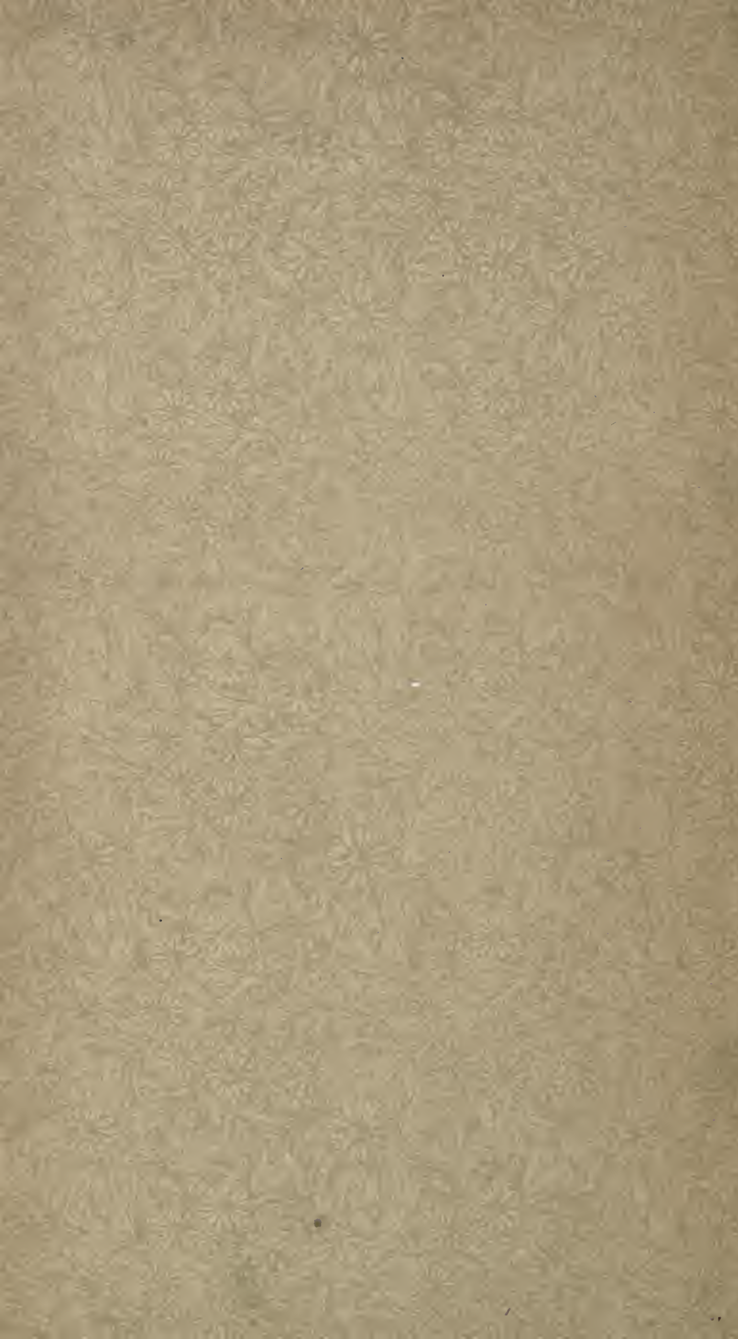

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